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## LATE REVEREND THOMAS BOSTON
## OF ETTRICK;

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INCLUDING

## HIS MEMOIRS, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

EDITED BY THE

REV. SAMUEL M'MILLAN.

VOL. X.

ABERDEEN:
GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.
M.DCCC.LI.

A

# SERIES OF SERMONS,

INCLUDING THOSE PREACHED ON THE

## NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF CHRIST:

ALSO,

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE DELINEATED,

IN

SEVERAL PRACTICAL DISCOURSES.

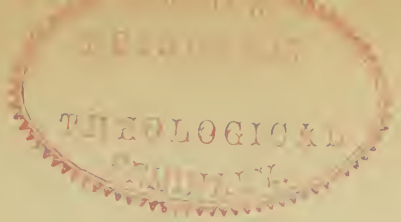
BY THE

REV. THOMAS BOSTON,

OF ETTRICK.

ABERDEEN:
GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

1851.



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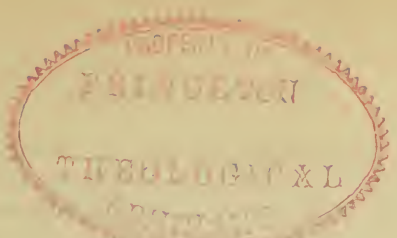

# SERMONS.

## DEPARTING FROM INIQUITY THE DUTY OF ALL WHO NAME THE NAME OF JESUS.*

### SERMON I.

2 Tim. ii. 19,

*And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

A solemn occasion of renewing our covenant with God being before us, it is necessary that we count the cost ere we begin to build. A Christian profession is easy, a Christian practice not so. It is melancholy to see how many in their practice do yoke together the name of Christ, and the working of iniquity, as if they had found out that secret of conjoining light and darkness, Christ and Belial, which is hid from all saints. Our text confounds this mystery of iniquity, shewing that men must either part with Christ, or depart from iniquity: And, says the apostle, "let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

In this verse, the apostle obviates that scandal, and that shaking discouragement, which arose to the saints, from the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, mentioned in verse 17. Satan could stand on the ruins of these men, and affright the saints with this temptation, Behold! what loose ground you stand upon! these who are now shipwrecked stood once as fair for the harbour as you. To drive the bottom out of this temptation, the apostle tells them, that for all this the foundation of the perseverance of real saints stands firm, as in ver. 19, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." As if he had said, The devil has got but his own, he has got none of Christ's. They were among Christ's sheep indeed; they were, however, nothing but the devil's goats, of whom he ever had a sure hold by some iniquity or other, one lust or other; and now by this bond of iniquity he has drawn them out from among the sheep of Christ: 1 John ii. 19,

* This and the following discourses on this text were delivered in May and June 1719.

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." But the foundation upon which every real saint is built is sure, and can never be overturned. This is the decree of election; (1.) A foundation of God's own laying; (2.) A sealed foundation of God's own sealing; and therefore affording the most ample security. A seal is for confirming and ratifying a decree and purpose; the decree of election including the perseverance of the saints, as the means to the end, is sealed for this end, and that with a twofold seal; having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his," and, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

*First*, It is sealed with God's knowledge, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Amongst the mixed multitude in the church, the Lord knows his own. He knows those whom he has chosen, he cannot mistake them, though men may, and sometimes do, take others for them. He knows them practically, that is, he knows them, to distinguish them from others, he will take care of them, that they be not lost, as one does with what he knows to be his own; and this secures them.

*Secondly*, It is sealed with effectual sanctification; Eph. iv. 30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." He sees to the sanctification of his own, causing them to depart from iniquity, which is the only thing which can ruin them; and thus again they are secured.

For understanding this, consider, that the apostle here has an eye to the history of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Num. xvi. these Old Testament apostates who perished in their sin. There was a dispute betwixt them and Moses and Aaron for the priesthood; the congregation at length thought the former as much the Lord's as the latter, ver. 19; though at first it seems they knew not in whose favour to decide. Moses refers it to God's judgment, ver. 5, "The Lord will shew (Heb. make known) who are his, and who are holy;" importing, that the Lord knew who were his. This was the security of Moses and Aaron when the stroke came. When the earth was to swallow up Korah and his company, as in a spiritual sense it does all apostates, the congregation was, by God's appointment, charged to depart from the tents of these wicked men, and to touch nothing that was theirs, ver. 26. This charge was effectual to the congregation, but not to these men's wives and their children, ver. 27; so the latter perished, and the former were secured. It seems this was a

typical event, an emblem of the sure standing of the saints, while hypocrites fall away and perish.

This double seal answers to the two parts of the covenant; Jer. xxxii. 40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This covenant shall not fail on God's part, for it hath this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his;" nor on the part of the saints, for it hath this seal, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Let us attend,

1. To the seal itself, which, in its general nature, is a command of sanctification; in which consider, to whom it is directed, upon whom this awful charge is laid. They are the Lord's own words, directed to every one that nameth the name of his Son, that is, to all who profess Christ. And this character of professors serves not only to distinguish them from those without the church, who are incapable of apostacy; but also shows the obligation laid on them to holiness by their profession, the holy name named by them binding them to a holy life. The inconsistency between the holy profession and an unholy life, which, though men join together, God will have separated, sooner or later, for he will strip them either of their fair name, or their foul heart and life, in time or in eternity. Consider, the duty commanded, "to depart from iniquity," as from a thing one formerly stood to and followed. Iniquity is that thing which we all naturally follow as a master and leader; but there must be a falling off from it, an apostacy, or falling away from sin, as the word imports. And this is the way to prevent apostacy from the Lord; for this does import, that it is some one iniquity or other indulged, and left to reign in the heart, which betrays professors into apostacy, as Judas, Demas, &c. Consider,

2. How this can be a seal to secure the saints and elect ones from apostacy, since it is but a commandment? To this I answer, that the nature of the preceding seal would seem to have required this expression, "And they that are his depart from iniquity." But it is in form of a command, to show that the saints depart from iniquity by choice, and that they are by the Lord himself powerfully determined to this choice; so that their perseverance is both rational and gracious. It is a command, at the same time it is a powerful and efficacious command of God, like that in Gen. i. 3, "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light;" a command which effects what it requires in all who are his. It is such a command as that in Num. xvi. 26, (quoted above), which brought away from the tents of Dathan and Abiram, all who were not to be swallowed up

with them. And this command is going through wherever the gospel is preached, and will go till the last day; like a brisk wind separating the corn from the chaff, carrying away from the tents of sin all who are ordained to eternal life, though others dwell on in them still. Thus, though the profane and hypocritical, and all who are not the Lord's, are still held by some one bond of sin or other which is never broken: yet this powerful word looses the bands of all sin, sets them and their sins asunder, and keeps them asunder, who, being sealed with the first seal, are his. And all this God's efficacious word can do, as well as keep the world from returning into its primitive mass of confusion; Heb. i. 3, "Upholding all things by the word of his power." And so it is a seal securing them from apostacy. From this subject two general doctrines may be proposed:

Doctrine I. That God doth charge all who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

Doctrine II. That God's charge to depart from iniquity becomes infallibly effectual in all who are his, so as that they do truly depart from iniquity, while others hold it fast to their utter ruin. I begin with the

*First*, That God doth charge all that name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

In illustrating this point, I shall shew,

I. Who they are whom the Lord charges to depart from iniquity.

II. What is implied in departing from iniquity, which God chargeth these to do.

III. How he charges these who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

IV. Why these particularly who name the name of Christ are charged to do so. And then add the practical improvement.

We are,

I. To shew who they are whom the Lord charges to depart from iniquity.

The text tells you it is every one who names the name of Christ. Thus, it is every one of you, whatever your character be. The poor pagans, amongst whom Christ is not named, God winks at them; but he charges you, and every one of you, to depart from iniquity. This charge is to you,

1. Baptized persons, capable to discern betwixt good and evil; the name of Christ is called upon you, and you name him; God charges you to depart from iniquity. You are engaged to be the Lord's, to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh. You

have no liberty to follow your lusts, and the vanity of your minds. You are charged, as God's subjects, to have no more converse with his enemies; since you have given up your names to Christ, you are to dwell no more in the tents of sin. There is no exception of the young more than the old, but every one who nameth the name of Christ is to depart from iniquity. The charge is to you,

2. Who profess faith in Christ, and hope of salvation through him. You name his name, and therefore you are charged. Although, perhaps, you will not so much as bow a knee to God, nor have so much as a form of godliness, yet you have not renounced the faith, nor your part in Christ; therefore, since you retain his name, and will be called Christians, depart from iniquity; live like Christians, and not like those who never heard of Christ.—The charge is to you,

3. Who pray to God through Christ. You name the name of Christ, and therefore are charged to depart from iniquity. Some of you, perhaps, pray only sometimes, as if you had more necessary business than serving the Lord; some pray ordinarily, yet go on in some sinful course or other; as if God was only to be served with fair words, and your lusts with the whole course of your life. But though this be your situation, this charge God lays on you notwithstanding, Depart from iniquity.—This charge is to you,

4. Who profess faith in Christ, and holiness of life also. You name the name of Christ, and therefore you should depart from iniquity. Are there not many such, whose lives are miserably stained in points of immorality, who walk most unsuitably to their character, by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of? Rom. ii. 23, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" God charges you to walk up to your character, to your profession, and to depart from iniquity.—This charge is,

*Lastly*, To communicants who name the name of Christ in a most solemn manner, by sitting down at his table, before God, angels, and men. This charge is to you. You have named this name, and gone back to those iniquities of which you were convinced. Are there not some who have adventured to stretch forth their hand to the Lord at his table, and have quickly again stretched it out to their lusts? To you the Lord is saying, Quit your communicating, or your iniquity; join no more an unholy life to such a fair and flaming profession.

We are now,

II. To shew what is implied in this departing from iniquity which God chargeth us to aim at.—Here,

1*st*, Let us inquire in what this departure, this happy apostacy lies. And,

2*dly*, What of iniquity God charges us to depart from.—We are

1*st*, To inquire in what this departure, this happy apostacy lies. There are five things which belong to it.—There is,

1. A giving up with our rest in sin. God says of sin to all who name Christ, "Arise ye, and depart for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Sinners, ye are settled on your lees, as wine on the dregs, but there must be a separation; you are dwelling in a dangerous place, like Lot in Sodom; lying among the pots, as the Israelites in Egypt; sleeping securely like the sluggard on his bed, "while his poverty cometh as one that travaileth, and his want as an armed man." God chargeth you to awake and bestir yourself, to spring to your feet, and prepare to make progress in the ways of holiness. —There is,

2. A going off from sin, and giving up with it: Job xxxiv. 32, "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." God is saying to you of sin's dominion, as he said to the Israelites at Horeb, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount; therefore up and be gone from the tents of wickedness; ye have dwelt too long in the tents of Mesech and Kedar." May not the time past suffice to have done the will of the flesh? 1 Pet. iv. 3, Ye "have long wandered on the mountains of vanity, come away from them now: Song iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." Bid a long farewell now, and turn your backs on the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.—There is,

3. A standing off from sin, as the word properly signifies: Prov. iv. 15, "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Keep yourselves at a distance. Stand off from it as from a fire that will consume you, as from a leprosy that will infect you, as from an unclean thing that will defile you, as from a sword and arrow which will pierce and wound you to death, as from a serpent whose biting and stinging is poisonous, painful, and deadly.—There is,

4. A going off to the other side, namely, to Christ and holiness; Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." There can be no neutrality in the matter betwixt sin and holiness, no standing between the two: "He that is not with me is against me," saith Jesus; "and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad," Matth. xii. 30. Sin and holiness are such opposites, that one of them must be predominant in every subject capable of either. Apostates

from religion betake themselves to the other side, and they who run away from Christ, they list themselves under Satan's banner; and so do those who fall away from sin, fall in with Christ and newness of life.—There is,

*Lastly*, A going farther and farther from sin. Even the saints must always be departing from it: Job, xi. 14, "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles." The first departure of the saints in conversion, though it be sincere, is not perfect; but what is then begun, must be held on in the progress of sanctification, as a spring, when opened, runs and runs on, till the mud be wholly removed out of the fountain. Prov. iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." They, having this hope, purify themselves, even as God is pure, 1 John iii. 3. And hence their departing from sin consists in daily mortification, and living more and more to righteousness.

*Secondly*, Let us inquire what of iniquity God charges us to depart from. It is the accursed thing, with which we have nothing to do. We must depart from all sin, from the whole of it.—We must depart,

1. From under the dominion of sin: Rom. vi. 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Sin has a dominion over all who are out of Christ. It commands their whole man. The motions of it are the laws they obey. It is a dominion which is opposed to Christ's; in the one, grace reigns unto life; but in the other, sin reigns unto death. Christ offers to break the bands of your yoke; come then to him, and shake off the yoke of your sins, renounce your allegiance, withdraw and refuse obedience to your old masters; say, "What have I any more to do with idols?"—We must depart,

2. From the practice of sin, Isa. lv. 7, quoted above. Give up with and put an end to your sinful courses; be no longer workers of iniquity, for such workers will get a sad reward of their work, Matth. vii. 23, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." To what purpose do men pretend to believe in Christ, while they are the servants of sin? How can one serve two such contrary masters? What avails the pretended belief of the truth, which purges not the heart and life of ungodliness and unrighteousness; Rom. i. 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Depart then from the practice of sin,—in your outward man, your life and conversation. God is saying to you this day, James, iv. 8, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-

minded." Reform your lives, if ever you would have communion with God here or hereafter, Psalm xxiv. 3, 4, Isa. i. 16, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil." Look to your conversation, see what is in it offensive to God, and dishonouring to his name, and depart from all this; Lam. iii. 40, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."—Turn from gross pollutions of the outward man, and live the Christian life, or give over the Christian name, Jer. vii. 9,—11. There have been sober Heathens, who were remarkable for their temperance, their justice in dealings, and, in a word, regular lives according to the precepts of morality. But how many Christians are there, whose lives are stained with profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness, injustice, dishonesty, filthiness, and other gross pollutions, by reason of which the way of truth is evil spoken of! God charges you, since ye name the name of Christ, to depart from these, upon the pain of eternal exclusion from his presence, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, Gal. v. 19—21. Wherefore, let him that did these things do so no more. Turn from the lesser pollutions of the outward man; Acts, xxiv. 16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." A person may be drowned in a rivulet, as well as in the deep sea, if they take not heed to themselves. Vain and idle words, as well as vile and wicked ones, may ruin a man: Matth. xii. 36, 37, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that a man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." There is a careless way of living, though not the way of open profanity, which yet is offensive to tender Christians, in which men swim to destruction in a stream of sins that few in the world make any account of, and they go to hell without making the sound of their feet to be heard by the way. Hear their doom, Psalm cxxv. 5, "As for such that turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," Eph. iv. 17. Look to the law and to the testimony; cleanse your way by these, Psalm cxix. 9. If the word of God condemn your practice, though all the world justify it, God charges you to depart from it. Depart from the practice of sin in the inner man, James iv. 8, (quoted above), Psal. xxiv. 3. 4. Sin may be beaten from the outworks, while it has retired in safety to the heart: there may in appearance be a clean life, while the heart is foul all over, and wickedness is practised at ease in the secret chambers of imagery.

Therefore God charges you, as Jer. iv. 14, "O Jerusalem! wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Turn, then, from heart vileness. Since the heart is as open to God as the life, it is of little use to be as a whited sepulchre, while within we are full of rottenness, to clean the outside of the cup while the inside is full of ravening. Purge your hearts of speculative filthiness; away with filthy imaginations, impure thoughts, envy, covetousness, malice, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Be as much concerned to crush these vipers in the shell, as to resist external actions. Turn from heart-vanity, Eph iv. 17 (quoted above). Vain thoughts are like idle words, offensive to God, and therefore hated and resisted by the godly; Psalm cxix. 113, "I hate vain thoughts." Vanity of heart is the next step to, and paves the way for vileness of heart and life. It is the house swept and garnished, to which the devil returns with seven other spirits worse than himself. Therefore labour to get your hearts filled with good motions and holy desires, regulated by the fear of God, warmed with his love, guarded by watchfulness, and so busied as that ye may not feed on wind, but may be taken up about what may be of good use, both profitable and pleasing.

3. Depart from the devising and contriving of sin. A good man may be surprised into sin, but for a man to sit down and contrive sinful actions, is to make his heart a forge to Satan. To sleep and wake in pursuing the contrivance of sin, is the character of a wicked man; Psalm xxxvi. 4, "He deviseth mischief upon his bed, he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil." Thus men set themselves wilfully in an ill way, which grieves the Spirit, extinguishes his motions, and wastes the conscience. Men may show their worldly wit in this way, that they are wise to do evil; and they may, for a time, prosper in their ways, and bring their wicked devices to pass, Psalm xxxvii. 7. But such a habitual practice will prove a man graceless, 1 John iii. 8, 9, and will be bitterness in the end, for evil doers shall be cut off, Psalm xxxvii. 9. Depart, then, from the devising of sin, or quit the name of Christians.

4. Depart from the love of sin; Ezek. xvi. 6, "Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations." 1 John ii. 15, 16. While the love of sin reigns in the heart, though they may seem to depart from it, the devil has a pledge of them that they will not go far away, but that they will come again back to him. This is that which makes so many communicants a scandal to their profession; so many who put their hand to the plough, to look back. They still

love sinful liberty, their hearts are not divorced from their lusts, and so they return to their idols. If you name the name of Christ, and profess love to him, God charges you—to turn your esteem of sin into disdain and contempt of it, Isa. ii. 20, "Cast your idols to the moles and to the bats." Let grace and holiness have the ascendant of sin and wickedness in your esteem. Account them no more the happy men who take to themselves a liberty in sinful courses, but as men who are most miserable, vile, and pitiful, as slaves to sin, and in the road to destruction, Psalm xv. 4. You are charged to turn your love of sin into hatred and abhorrence of it, Psalm xcvii. 10, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Hate it as evil, as the worst of evils, worse than any sufferings; hate it as hell; Rom. xii. 19, "Abhor that which is evil." Hate it as destructive to the soul, as dishonouring and displeasing to God. Abhor it as you would do a cup of poison, though a golden cup. Your love of it must be turned into loathing. Look not only upon it as an ill thing, but as a filthy and a loathsome thing, at which one's heart is apt to stand, Isa. xxx. 22; Ezek. xviii. 31. You have long kept at it as a sweet morsel. Let your soul apprehend its real filthiness, so as that you may vomit it up again. Your former cleaving unto sin must be turned into longing to get rid of it, Rom. vii. 24, "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Long to be free of it, as a prisoner longs for the opening of the prison-doors, as a captive for his liberty. Look on it as a burden on your back, which makes you stoop; as a burden on your head, which perplexes you how to get free of it; as a burden on your stomach, which you will endeavour to cast up. This is the heart's departing from sin, without which all other departures from it will be to little purpose.

5. Depart from the enjoyment of the fruits of sin. The righteous man is one who despises the gain of oppression, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing of evil. When lovers part, they give back their tokens; and when a sinner parts with his sin in earnest, he will part with its fruits, whatever advantages he has by them. This is so evident even to a natural conscience awakened, that Judas, repenting of his betraying of Christ, could no longer bruik the thirty pieces he had made by his sin; and Zaccheus, sincerely repenting, is ready to make restitution, Luke, xix. 8. It was Balaam's character, he loved the wages of unrighteousness. And he who wilfully keeps the fruit of his sin, thereby nails down his own soul in a state of impenitency, so that he cannot repent of that sin; he binds the guilt of it on himself as with bands of iron and brass,

so that it cannot be forgiven while this disposition remains. Wherefore purge out this leaven, and cast away the fruits with the tree.

6. Depart from the occasions of sin, and all temptations to it, Ezek. xiv. 6, (quoted above): It is vain to pretend to depart from sin, when men do not watch against the occasions to it. They who in a siege resolve really not to give up the town, will defend the outworks as long as they can. These do not depart from, but run into sin, who cast themselves into the way of temptations. Therefore says Solomon; Prov. iv. 14. 15, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass over it, turn from it, and pass away." Mind the apostle's advice, 1 Thes. v. 22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Occasions and temptations will seek us out while in this evil world; but let every one who nameth the name of Christ be upon his guard against them.

*Lastly*, Depart from the workers of iniquity; 2 Cor. vi. 17, Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Let birds of a feather flock together; but if ye name the name of Christ, depart from the tents of wicked men. True, we cannot altogether shun them while we are in the world; but to make choice of ungodly persons for our companions, is the way to ruin; Prov. xiii. 20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Wherefore, if you be setting your faces heavenward, depart from those whose faces are towards hell; Acts, ii. 40, "With many words did Peter testify and exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation." Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shall keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

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THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

## SERMON II.

2 Tim. ii. 19,

*And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Having, in the preceding discourse, considered to whom the charge is addressed, and what is imported in the charge, "depart from iniquity,"

We now proceed,

III. To explain the nature of this charge, or to shew how the

Lord charges those who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. You may know the nature of this charge given to them in the text, by these following properties. It is,

1. An universal charge, and this in two respects. 1*st*, In respect of the persons naming. "Every one," says the text, "who nameth the name of Christ:" there is no exception in the charge, it is directed to all and sundry who profess Christ, or who are called Christians, whether ye be communicants or not. Since you are Christians by name, you are charged by the God who made you, to betake yourselves to the Christian life, and depart from iniquity. Whether you be high and honourable, or low and mean in the world, whatever difference is betwixt you and others, God makes none in this charge. But whether young or old, you are included in the charge, and you cannot resist it, but at your highest peril.—2*dly*, The charge is universal in respect of the sins which you are to depart from; Ezek. xviii. 31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" They are all and every one of them dishonouring to God, displeasing to him, disagreeable to the holy name by which ye are called, and therefore all of them are to be departed from.—You must part with your fashionable sins, (with which, to be neighbour-like, you comply, though you should be a wonder to many), as well as with unfashionable ones, to which you have no temptation; Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world." You must depart from your gainful sins, as well as those by which you make no profit: Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" You must part with the sins of your calling and station in the world, as well as those which lie out of your road. This is an ordinary screen for sin; but see Luke iii. 12, 13, 14. You must part with little sins, as well as with great sins; with your darling sin, your bosom-idol, as with others less beloved; with the sins of your constitution, that sin which most easily besets you, Heb. xii. 1; in one word, with all your sins of heart and life. It is,

2. A peremptory charge; Acts xvii. 30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men every where to repent." There are no *ifs* or *ands* for your keeping your sins, or any of them. Many go about to compound the matter with God. They will part with such and such a sin, they will only harbour this and that, which is but a little one, a right eye, &c.; but in vain, you must part with all. If you would give rivers of oil, or

the fruit of your body for your sins, you cannot be allowed to keep any one of these accursed things. It is,

3. A charge for the present time; Psalm xcv. 7, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." It requires obedience upon hearing of it, a speedy and quick compliance, like that, Psalm cxix. 60, "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments." You are not allowed to advise another day, whether you will depart from iniquity or not. For ought you know, it is now or never with you; 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And if you refuse this once more, God may take you at your refusal, and determine your eternal state by it, Prov. i. 24, and downwards. Often refusals are most dangerous; Prov. xxix. 1, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." It is,

4. A charge with certification, a charge upon your highest peril: Heb. xii. 25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." You are charged to depart from iniquity, as you will answer it before the Judge of the quick and dead. There is in this instance a fivefold certification. There is this certification,

(1.) That if you do it not, you shall incur the high displeasure of God: Rom. i. 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Who knows the power of His wrath who is able to frown the creature into the lowest abyss of misery? His anger makes the hills to tremble, the mountains to smoke; alas! how can worm man bear it?—There is this certification,

(2.) That if you do it not, you shall have no communion with God in duties: Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" You may go to your prayers, but God will not be found of you: he will turn the back and not the face to you: Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." You shall find a separation-wall built up between God and you: Isa. lix. 2. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." You may come to a communion-table, but your harboured lusts shall separate betwixt God and you; this will make it a sapless meal to you. There is this certification,

(3.) That if you do it not, your best services and duties will not be accepted, but rejected as an abomination. Remember that God requires obedience rather than sacrifices; and it is in vain for men

to think to please God in the external acts of devotion, while they do not make conscience of obeying his commandments in holiness of life; Prov. xxviii. 9, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." Will men dare to go over the belly of their duty enjoined them from the Lord's word, without ever aiming to comply with it, and yet think to communicate acceptably? There is this certification,

(4.) That if you do it not, you will get a curse instead of a blessing in your approaches to God, Mal. ii. 2, 3. God has made some monuments of his vengeance, who have presumed in their sins unrepented of to approach his presence in a solemn manner, Lev. x. 1, 3. But because God does not strike men often this way, there are found those who, living in secret wickedness, come to the Lord's table to cloak their wickedness, little considering the blasting curse to which they expose their souls. There is this certification,

(5.) That if you do it not, you shall perish in your iniquity; Heb. xii. 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." True holiness is in all manner of conversation. One thing lacking will ruin and sink the ship of your souls, as well as a thousand.

We are now,

IV. To show why those particularly who name the name of Christ, are charged to depart from iniquity. All to whom the gospel comes are so charged, but those who profess Christ are in a special manner thus charged. For,

1. The practice of iniquity is a contradiction to their profession; so that they cannot have this practice, but they give the lie to their profession. An holy profession, and an unholy practice, are such inconsistencies, as that the one overthrows the other; "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. By their profession they are friends of God, by their practice they are enemies; by the one they carry Christ's yoke, by the other sin and Satan's. Thus the life is woven into one practical lie.

2. Whosoever partakes of Christ's salvation, departs from iniquity; for salvation from sin is the leading and chief part of Christ's salvation; "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Therefore none can justly claim Christ as his Saviour, who still lives in sin. Hence we are told, James ii. 17, "That faith without works is dead." And a holy life is just as necessary to evidence our interest in Christ, as light is necessary to evidence that the sun is risen.

3. The practice of iniquity in such, is in a peculiar manner offensive to God, and grieving to his Spirit. Sin is offensive to his holiness, wherever it is found; but the offence is doubled in those who name the name of Christ; Amos iii. 2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Friends wounds pierce deepest; and the nearer that the relation is betwixt the offender and the offended, the offence is the worse taken, Psalm xli. 9, and lv. 12, 13. The treachery of a traitor is more grievous than the enmity of an open enemy, and more severely punished; and accordingly the impiety of those who name the name of Christ, is more heinous than that of others who do not; Matth. xi. 22, "But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." The breaking of a covenant, which all the baptized as well as communicants have entered into, is most aggravating, both in respect of sin and punishment. See Matth. xxiv. 51. Compare Jer. xviii. 34.

*Lastly*, It reflects a peculiar dishonour upon God; such sins bring a scandal upon that holy name and religion which they profess; Rom. ii. 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." The loose lives of professors expose religion to the ridicule and reproach of its enemies; so that they are the Judases by whom the Son of man was betrayed. Religion is the worse of them; and it meets with worse entertainment in the world, that workers of iniquity do profess it.

We are now,

V. To make some practical improvement; and this,

*First*, In a use of information. This doctrine shews us,

1. That all and every one amongst us, by the authority of God who made us, and in whose name we were baptised, are obliged to depart from iniquity, You cannot keep it without rebellion against your sovereign Lord, without treachery and breach of your covenant. O that men would seriously reflect on the authority they are under! consider the charge given them from heaven, and how they will answer for their disobedience to it, when God rises up to judgment. This shews us,

2. That for men to abstain from the sacrament of the supper, to this end that they may not be abridged of their liberty in sinful courses, is not only impious, but childish and foolish. It is impious, as it is a determined disobedience to God's express charge. It is foolish, because this liberty is already cut off from them, and renounced by them, by their taking on the possession and badge of Christianity. Their abstaining from the sacrament of the supper, unless they also renounce their baptism, and all their part in Christ,

will not take their name out of this charge from heaven. We are instructed,

3. That they are bold adventurers, and run a dreadful risk, who come in their sins, unrepented of, and not sincerely resolved against, and sit down at the Lord's table; 1 Cor. xi. 29, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." It is one of the most solemn ways of naming the name of Christ, to communicate at his table. Whoso partakes of this bread and cup do solemnly and practically confess, before God, angels, and men, that they take Christ, and part with their lusts, that they proclaim an irreconcileable war against the devil, the world, and the flesh, according to this charge. And for such to be still in the enemy's camp, or to return after the sacrament to their former known sinful courses, is solemnly to lie, and to mock God, the consequences of which will be most terrible: Gal. vi. 7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

4. Behold here how the Lord's table is fenced, by a fence of God's own making: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." There is a great privilege before us, the making a most solemn profession of the name of Christ, and our communion with him. Here in the text are God's terms of admission to the privileges, and these are most reasonable; which are, that those who shall profess their coming over to Christ's side, shall desert the enemy's camp; if they be for the light, they must renounce the works of darkness; if they take Christ, they must let these go. You hear the terms; lay your hand to your heart, and see what you will do. If men will not depart from iniquity, let them not take Christ's name in vain. Our text debars from this holy table, whosoever will indulge themselves in, and will not part with, any known sin whatsoever; particularly,

(1.) All neglectors of the duties of piety towards God. Surely prayerless persons, and such as only call on God now and then, slighters of God's ordinances, his word, his Sabbaths, depart not from iniquity, but live in it, and cannot with a good conscience sit down at his table. Though they may deceive men, they cannot deceive God, who says to them, Psalm l. 16, 17, "What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Depart from these, then, or presume not to sit down at the Lord's table.

(2.) All who make not conscience of their duty towards men, righteousness, mercy, and charity. Those who can wrong their

neighbours, by undermining and cheating them, picking and stealing from them, by unfaithfulness of what they have of other men's among their hands, are fitter to join a society of robbers, than to sit down at a communion-table; Jer. vii. 11, "Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? behold, I have seen it, saith the Lord." See 1 Cor. vi. 9. Those who shut up their bowels from the poor and needy, who oppress and grind the faces of others, are utterly unfit for this seal of God's mercy. Those who live in hatred of their neighbours, in malice and envy, and who cannot be reconciled to, nor forgive those who have done them a wrong, are unfit for this seal of God's pardon; Matth. vi. 15, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Depart from these, or presume not to go to the table of the Lord; for with a good conscience you cannot come there, unless you be resolved from the heart to be conscientious in all your relations, conscientious neighbours, parents, children, masters, servants, &c.

3. All those who are not sober in their lives; Tit. ii. 12. The gospel "teaches, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Can a man who will not quit the table of drunkenness, be fit for the Lord's table. Do but imagine, a person sitting at the Lord's table one day, and getting drunk another day; what a monstrous and horrible thing is this! Cor. x. 21, "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils." Those who are wedded to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, will but get a stroke to their souls by such a solemn approach. Depart from intemperance, then, and from the vain way of the world, or presume not to approach this holy table.

4. All those who suffer their tongues to go at random, and make no conscience of their words. It is the character of persons very different from the people of God, which you have: Psalm xii. 2, 3, 4, "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak: the Lord will cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things; who have said, With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" Let swearers and cursers take heed to this, and let them not deceive themselves with this, that they do it only in a passion; let them soberly consider what agreement there is betwixt a solemn profession of the holy name one day, and a profaning it another; betwixt their professing faith in Christ, bringing their consciences to his blood, and their endeavours for God's blessing one day, and another day swearing by their faith, their conscience, and cursing themselves or others. Let liars, filthy

speakers, slanderers, and backbiters, who use their tongues so busily in the service of the devil, know what they have to expect, if they approach the table of the Lord, Psalm l. 16—23. And let all know, that a loose unbridled tongue will prove a man's religion vain; and this vain religion will leave him in the lurch at length; Jam. i. 26, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this man's religion is vain." Depart therefore from all these, or presume not to approach the Lord's table.

5. All those who make no conscience of inward purity, the keeping of the heart; Matth. v. 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Outside religion may give you outward privileges, but it will leave you to break your teeth on the shell, without ever enjoying the kernel of them. Speculative impurities and sins entertained in the heart, will exclude you from heaven; and, before the Lord, will exclude you from his table, if you are not repenting of them, and resolving, through grace, to wrestle against them. Depart also from these, or venture not to approach his holy table.

6. All those who entertain and indulge themselves in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, or are not content to have their sin and duty discovered to them; Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." One thing may mar all in the bargain betwixt Christ and your souls. If one lust be reserved and excepted, it is no bargain; Mark x. 21, 22, "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." Men, then, should soberly consider, with what conscience they can sit down at the Lord's table, while they are living in sin, in that which they are convinced to be sin, and yet are never endeavouring to amend.

5. Behold how the door of access to the Lord's table is opened to all true penitents, whose hearts are loosed from, and set against, all sin. Those who would now sincerely depart from their iniquity, and turn from it without reserve to the Lord, are welcome to name the name of Christ, they have his Father's allowance for it: Isa. iv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." He saith not, that they who will name the name of Christ must be without iniquity; there are none such in this lower world; but they

must depart from it, they must turn their backs on it, though it may tempt them; they are to flee from it though it may follow; they are to resist it, nay even though it attack them. Whosoever, then, is brought to be weary of their former sinful courses, are sincerely desirous of, and are resolving through grace to be the Lord's only wholly, and for ever, to take Christ for their Saviour from sin and wrath, to take holiness for their way, and God's word for their rule, they have access to the covenant, and to the seal of the covenant, in a comfortable way.

*Lastly*, This shews us the necessity of self-searching, examining ourselves on this occasion. 1 Cor. xi. 28. Communicants should examine themselves beforehand as to their sins, as well as with respect to their graces, since God has commanded every one that nameth the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. Make not superficial work of communicating, but examine your heart and life for the time past, that ye may discover what has been, and what is your iniquity or iniquities, from which you are now to depart: Lam. iii. 40, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." One reason why there is so little reformation on the back of communions is, that people do not beforehand take a view of what is wrong, they do not consider what they are to endeavour the reformation of. Now, if a person do not know what he should depart from, how can he depart from it? Wherefore the same authority which charges you to depart from iniquity, charges you to take a view of what has been amiss in your ways. Take some time for this, and be as particular as you can, to search out the old leaven, and devote to a curse what you find out. Examine how your hearts stand affected to your sins for the time present, whether you really repent of them or not, whether you be ashamed of them before the Lord, are heartily grieved for them, hate them, and are longing to be rid of them, to be delivered from the guilt, the stain, the power, and the indwelling of them, or not. If you have not attained to this, you are, while in this case, utterly unfit for a communion table. If you have, the master of the feast makes you welcome. If your repentance be real it will reach to all your known sins whatsoever, without exception, both the root and the branches, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Examine how your hearts stand affected to them for the time to come; if you be sincerely resolved through grace, on newness of life. Surely it is meet at all times, but especially before a communion occasion, to be thus resolved: Job xxxiv. 31, 32, "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do

no more." If you cannot think to give up with your sinful courses, or to live without them, do not mock God, and bring more guilt upon your souls, by sitting down at his table: but if you would wish to be holy as God is holy, and, under a sense of your inability to subdue sin, desire to betake yourself to Christ for his sanctifying Spirit, resolving through grace to watch against sin, and resist the motions of it, ye are welcome guests to the Lord's table.—We shall only add,

*Secondly*, An use of exhortation. We exhort you to depart from iniquity, turn from your sins, since you name the name of Christ. Let none think to find shelter for their sins under this, namely that they intend not to take the sacrament. You have taken a sacrament already, which obliges you to do this, and therefore I charge one and all of you to depart from your iniquity this day. If you will not, know the name Christ, whose name you name, while you will not depart from iniquity; it will be your great enemy: Luke xix. 27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay before me." Sin is the great make-bait betwixt God and the sinner, and the friendship with your lusts will be enmity with the Lord. Hereupon I would ask you, How think ye to live on God's ground, amongst the midst of his creatures, while God is your enemy? Know ye not that all the creatures are banded together against him to whom God is an enemy? Does not the meat thou eatest say, Lord if thou wilt allow me, I will choke this rebel? The earth, I will swallow him up who will not depart from iniquity? Again, let me ask you, how will you look the king of terrors in the face? What comfort will these sins which thou now holdest fast leave thee, when the old sinful tabernacle begins to fall down, the soul to flee away, and the carcase is brought down to a grave, both to be imprisoned, the former in hell, the latter in the grave, till the resurrection? How will you bear to be raised up and sisted before the great tribunal, to answer for all those sins you will not now depart from, and to receive the eternal reward of your works?

Particularly, O communicants! presume not to sit down at the Lord's table, without departing from iniquity. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may keep the feast.—O communicants! will ye betray the Son of man with a kiss? When sitting down at his table, you profess yourselves to be his friends, members of his family. But if you depart not from iniquity, you will betray him as sure as Judas did, for you are in league with his enemies. And your vows at the communion-table will become like Samson's green withs, which were broken at the first onset, and you will return back again with more eagerness to these sins from which you never really departed:

you know what will be the end of such conduct.—Will ye go out against Christ as against a thief with swords and staves? You do it by going in your sins unrepented of to his table. We are to commemorate his love in dying for our sins, sins which furnished a Judas to betray him, nails to pierce him, and a spear to enter into his side. And will you presume on this exercise, holding fast these sins, and refusing to let them go? If you would proclaim war against Christ, instead of sitting down at his table, you could reach him no other way, than you will do by holding fast iniquity. It is the day of his espousals, of his coronation; let us not make it a day of crucifying him afresh.—Would you see Jesus, and in him God reconciled to your souls, blessing you with the seal of your pardon, peace, and right to eternal life? Come away to Christ freely from your sins, make your most beloved lusts stepping-stones, over the belly of which you will come to his table, putting a bill of divorce into the hand of them all, with a sincere resolution, through grace, never to entertain them willingly again. In this event, I know nothing to make the separation betwixt him and you: Isa. lix. 1, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." But, alas! some say, I cannot get rid of my sins. To this I answer, Is thine iniquity thy burden, which thou wouldst as fain be rid of, as of an oppressing weight? Then thy heart is away from it, and God accepts thee in this case, sincerely, though not perfectly, to be departed from it. It is one thing to be sitting still in a house, willingly entertaining a guest; another, to be labouring to get away, though the troublesome guest will not part with us. If the latter be thy case, you may come to the Lord at his table, with hopes of welcome, you will then be strengthened for the struggle, and shall get the seal of complete victory in due time. Amen.

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THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

## SERMON III.

2 Tim. ii. 19,

*And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Having, in the preceding discourses, offered all that was intended on the first doctrine taken from this subject, I now proceed to a consideration of

Doct. II. That God's charge to depart from iniquity is infallibly

effectual in all who are his, so as that they do truly depart from iniquity, while others hold it fast to their own ruin, Acts xiii. 48; Matth. i. 21; or briefly thus, that all the elect of God shall depart from iniquity.

In explaining this, I shall,

I. Shew when and how far this charge is effectual in all who are his.

II. Evince the truth of this doctrine that the charge is effectual in all who belong to God.

III. We shall, in the conclusion, make some practical improvement.

We are,

I. To shew when and how far this charge is effectual in all who are his. I shewed before, from what of sin we are to depart. And, in general, this charge is effectual, in all the parts of it, in them who are the Lord's. But more particularly,

1. It is effectual in them who are his, in this life. Here the work is truly and happily begun; they all become saints on earth, who shall be saints in heaven, Psalm xvi. 3. Though by nature they are wild olives, growing in the forest of the world lying in wickedness, they are plucked up and planted in the nursery of grace, where they grow till transplanted into paradise; while their fellows stand still in that forest till cut down for the fire. It is effectual in this life, in a gospel-sense, though not in a law-sense, in respect of a perfection of parts, though not of degrees. And this in three respects:

(1.) It is effectual in all who belong to God, in so far as they come freely away from sin in conversion. Some may be longer in coming away than others, they may abide in the tents of wickedness, after other sealed ones are gone, but they shall infallibly follow sooner or later; For, says Jehovah, Joel iii. 21, "I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." This one and the other may often be passed by; while others are taken, who shall certainly have a place in the building of mercy. Here consider the following things:—That all mankind by nature lie in wickedness: They are dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. They are in the devil's camp, they are bound with the bands of wickedness, estranged from God and all that is truly good. They will not leave it, because it is their element.—Consider also, that yet among them God has some which he has chosen to life, and whom in his eternal purpose of love to their souls, he has sealed as his own, to bring them away, and to make them partakers of his glory.—Consider farther, that the alarm of the gospel comes indefinitely to all, whether they be the Lord's or not. It comes to the devil's

camp, and says, 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separated, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." It says as Moses to Israel, in respect of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men." Or as the angel to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain," Gen. xix. 17. Consider, that as God knows who among them are his, so he infallibly brings them away from the rest, in obedience to the gospel-alarm; "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts xiii. 48. This march out of the devil's camp, was begun at the first preaching of the gospel in paradise, and is continued to this day, though sometimes more, sometime fewer go off together. And it will be continued until there be not one of them that belong to God left among them; and then comes the end.

Now, in conversion, the Spirit sounding the alarm, Depart ye, depart ye; they that are the Lord's are impressed by it; so the dead soul awakes, the impenitent heart melts, they spring to their feet, resolved and determined to depart from the tents of sin. The devil and those who are his, do what they can, by allurements and threats, to hold them still; but under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's host, they march out with banners displayed, and depart freely from iniquity; the trumpet still sounding, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." As to the nature of their departure, we observe the following things:—

[1.] They depart from sin sincerely. They depart from it, because it is a departing from God, contrary to his holy nature and law; they depart from it as sin, Luke xv. 18. They who belong to God, leaving their sins, leave them not from the inferior motives *only* of danger to themselves, here or hereafter; but from higher motives also, because they are offensive to God, they dishonour his Son, grieve his Spirit, transgress his law, and deface his image. Thus the worthy communicant reforms, and departs from iniquity. Here, however, there may be proposed this

Question, How do they with those sins from which they formerly departed from lower motives only, or which left them ere they left them? To this I answer, That they do with them as men used to do with those who die by their own hands. They bury them disgracefully, and throw stones upon their graves. They look back to them, and loathe them. They left them at first for their own sake; they go farther away from them for God's sake. They neglected them before, as having no use for them; they abhor them now for their intrinsic loathsomeness. They were hanging before betwixt heaven and earth, like Absalom on the oak; now they thurst the darts into their hearts, and throw them into a pit.

[2.] They depart from iniquity voluntarily; not out of constraint, but choice; Psalm cxix. 30, "I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me." They do not cast away sin only as one would do a live coal out of his bosom, because it will burn him; or a serpent, because it will sting him; but as a loathsome, unclean thing because it will defile him. Some depart from their iniquity against their will. They part with it as Phaltiel with his undutiful wife, 2 Sam. iii. 16. They dwell in the tents of sin, and will not move hence, till there is no abiding longer there for them; as the covetous man parts with the world at death, or when it is violently taken from him; whether he will or not, he must let it go. But this departure is not lasting, such will go back again, Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. And so hence there occurs a

Question, May not a person be driven from his iniquity by terror of God? To this I answer, I conceive that when the time comes, at which a person who belongs to God is to depart from iniquity, there are two trumpets which sound in his ears. The *first* trumpet is that of the law, which is so terrible, that it makes the man's soul quake within him, and makes an earthquake in the devil's camp to him, so that he finds no more firm footing there, nor rest as before, but he must flee for his life in consternation. But if there be no more, he may flee from one part of it to another, but he will still abide within the trenches. The *second* trumpet is that of the gospel, the still small voice, sounding pardon, peace, welcome, to Christ's camp, and to the feast of fat things, to all those who will depart from iniquity. This takes the trembling sinner by the heart, and makes him come away freely and voluntarily from iniquity; so that, although the trumpet of the law shall cease, this charms him so as he can stay no longer in the tents of sin, Hos. ii. 14, and iii. 5.

[3.] They depart from iniquity resolutely, absolutely, and unconditionally, cost what it will; they cannot, they will not, they must not stay. Others may do as they please; but, with Joshua, they peremptorily say, "We will serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv. 15. If all the world should sit still, they will go, though they should go alone. Satan may frame many objections against their departure, and enter into terms for their staying, as Pharaoh with the Israelites, about their departure from Egypt. But converting grace makes their ears deaf to all proposals of this nature. If they should leave all they have in the world, they must leave sin, Luke xiv. 26, if it should be never so much to their loss as to their temporal interest, they will depart; if they must go through fire and water, make their way out of it through briars and thorns,—any thing but sin; Rev. xiv. 4, "These are they who follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth." These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto

God and to the Lamb. He whose departing from iniquity depends on *ifs* and *ands*, effectual grace has not yet reached his heart.

[4.] They depart from iniquity speedily, without delays; Psalm cxix. 60, "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments." Many good purposes come to nothing by delays. The man intends to part with such and such a sin, to comply with such and such a duty, only he cannot do it yet. And whereas there is one hinderance in his way at present, there are two after; and so the project flies up for good and all. But they who belong to God are snatched away as brands out of the burning. They will delay no longer to depart from sin, than one delays to fling a burning coal out of his bosom, or a stinging serpent. Being determined to depart, they are determined to depart without delay, because a moment's delay in this matter may be an eternal loss.

[5.] They depart from it universally; Psalm cxix. 104, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Ezek. xviii. 31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Whoso departs from one sin sincerely, and as sin, departs from all sin known to them to be such; because the reason moving him to depart from one, is to be found in all. Every sin is a deadly wound to the soul; and therefore, if but one remain uncured, the man is a dead man; Matth. v. 29, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." One sin retained will make all our reformation naught, as Abimelech, the son of Jerubbaal's concubine, was the death of his seventy sons by his wives, excepting one, Jud. ix. 5. Hence those who belong to God depart from all sin without exception, however others may have their reserved idols. Thus they depart from that sin which is the sin of their constitution, that sin which attends their calling in the world, that sin to which they have the strongest and most frequent temptations; Psalm xviii. 23, "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." That sin which most easily besets us, Heb. xii. 1, is the predominant evil the heart must be loosed from, the right hand, and right eye, the one thing lacking, which mars all other things; from which, however loath they be to part, they will be made willing to part with it in the day of power. Thus, all who belong to God do come freely away from sin in conversion; and so the charge is effectual.

(2.) It is effectual in all who belong to God, in so far as they never again return to it as formerly, but persevere in that course of

holiness which is once begun. They who have once freely departed from the tents of wickedness, shall never again come back to them, they shall never mix again with the ungodly world, from among whom they have come out; Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Converting grace fixes a gulf betwixt the two, which they shall never repass. I own a gracious soul may fall from its first love, to carnal sluggishness, remissness, and indisposition for duties. Thus it was with the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4. Yea, they may fall into some enormous offences and gross transgressions of the law, as Peter did, and they may for some time lie in these unrepented of, as David and Solomon did; and they may relapse into the same sins formerly mourned over, Rev. xxii. 8; compare chap. xix. 10. Thus, Abraham denied his wife twice. They may thus fall after solemn engagements to the Lord, as Peter did, after the first communion, and after gracious manifestations, Song v. 1—3. To be more particular,

[1.] They shall never fall back to sin, with the same heart and good-will which they had to it before; not with a full consent, but with reluctance; Rom. vii. 19, "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that do I." They may be sin's captives while they are here, driven back to some iniquity or other by the force of temptation; but sin's ready subjects they shall never more be. There is a principle of grace within them, which, at the lowest ebb, will check that full spring-tide of sin which they were wont to have before they departed from it, Song v. 2.

[2.] They shall not lie still in sin, but sooner or later rise again to repentance. So did Peter, David, and Solomon. They shall not live in the habitual practice of any known sin. Hypocrites, after solemn engagements to God, may return and live in the habitual practice of their former lusts; like the mixed multitude sounding a retreat into Egypt, they may fall away and never recover. But though a straying slave never be sought after, a straying son will be. Those who belong to God may fall in the way, but they shall never fall out of God's way of holiness; Job xvii. 9, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Having once departed from iniquity, they shall hold on their way; for he that set them on the way shall keep them in it; 2 Thess. iii. 3, "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." The Lord is the keeper of all those who have departed from iniquity, and he watches night and day, Isa. xxvii. 2. They are kept by the word of God, which is a sufficient defence against the powers of darkness. Their keeper never leaves them, nor forsakes them, Heb. xiii. 5. When once

Christ takes hold of a soul, he will never part with it again, however low the pass to which they may be brought; Psalm lxxiii. 23, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand." None can loose his hold, nor pluck them out of his hand, John x. 28. Again, they have an immortal principle within them for carrying them forward. The Spirit of Christ dwells in them for ever, John xiv. 16. Grace is a never-dying seed, which remaineth in them, 1 John iii. 9. This, by virtue of the covenant, secures the continuance of their departure from iniquity, Jer. xxxii. 40. Hence, when the believer steps aside from the Lord, there is still in him a restlessness, more or less, until he return, like the dove into the ark, Song v. 2. Farther, sin can never recover that dominion over him which it has lost, and that irrecoverably; Rom. vi. 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." And though, in the war with sin, corruption may sometimes get the upper hand, yet grace shall overcome at length; Gen. xlix. 19, "Gad, a troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last."

3. It is effectual, in so far as they go farther and farther from it in the progress of sanctification Prov. iv. 18, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;"Isa. xl. 31, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," &c. Grace is of a growing nature; and though it grows not at all times, yet it does grow. The life of a saint is a going up out of the wilderness of this world; and the farther he goes, he is the nearer his journey's end. And thus a gracious soul is still departing from iniquity, and shall depart. He departs, by watching against it; and always the more watchful, the farther from it; Psalm xxxix. 1. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Any distance we can be at from sin while here, is a distance of opposition; and the more the Christian has his eyes in his head, to observe the motions of the enemy, to avoid occasions and temptations to sin, he is set at the greater distance from it. Unwatchfulness is the ruin of many. They who belong to God shall be made to watch; and if they be at a time taken nodding, it shall serve to make them more awake afterwards. Again they shall depart, by keeping up a struggle against sin; Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Sin may get quiet harbour in the breast of a hypocrite, but in those who are the Lord's it can get no more ease than mud in a spring-well, where there will be a working it out; John, iv. 14, "The water that I shall give him," saith Jesus, "shall be in him a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life." And this struggle will con-

tinue as long as there is a Canaanite in the land; for it is not, as in the hypocrite, against some kind of sins only, but against the whole kind of them. And the gracious soul will be groaning, longing, wrestling for the perfect delivery, no truce being to be made here, but the war undertaken for extirpation, Rom. vii. 24. Phil. iii. 13, 14. Finally, he departs, by growing in grace: Psalm, xcii. 12, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Many go back to their old lusts again, because, though they seem to depart from some sins, yet, being destitute of grace, they cannot grow in the opposite graces, and therefore it fares with them, as in Matth. xii. 44, 45, "Thus their last state is worse than the first." But as a man is always the farther from his disease, the more that nature is strengthened; so the gracious soul is set the farther from sin, the more that the contrary graces are made to grow in him. From this part of the subject, we may learn,

1. That if ye be the Lord's people by sincere dedication, his covenant-people, ye have come away freely from all your lusts, unto himself. You have been at his table solemnly devoting yourselves to him; if you have dealt honestly with him, and have not eaten and drunk unworthily, your hearts are loosed from all your idols, you have with heart and good-will turned your back on the Sodom of sinful courses, with sincere resolutions not to look back. However little influence this charge has had on others, it is effectual on you; you have taken the alarm, and have begun your march out of the tents of sin, you dare no more be disobedient to the heavenly vision. If so, it is well; if otherwise, you have but mocked God, and wronged your own souls. You may learn,

2. That if you be indeed the Lord's people by covenant savingly, you will not go back to your former lusts: Luke, ix. 62, "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." You are not to return to your vain conversation. You have lifted up your hand to the Lord, and you cannot go back in point of right; and unless you have been dealing deceitfully with God, you will not go back. Apostacy and backsliding take the mask of hypocrites; and fearful is their condition, for fallen stars were never genuine stars, but stars only in appearance: 1 John, ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us." Think on this when temptations come, that to return into the tents of sin, is to prove yourselves not to be the Lord's. We may learn,

*Lastly*, That if you be the Lord's by election you, shall part with

those sins which now part betwixt the Lord Christ and you. For though you hide yourselves from him who came to seek you, he notwithstanding will find you out; and as fast as your lusts hold you, and you them, the Lord will make you fain to cast them as fire out of your bosom, if he has any thoughts of eternal love to you. If he has not, you will get them kept, and you may embrace and hug them during life and through eternity; they shall clasp about you like serpents, stinging with endless despair. But it looks fearfully ill, while the trumpet of the gospel, day after day, and year after year, is sounding an alarm to depart from sin, and others are marching away in your sight, that you are still staying behind.

The life of a saint is a departing from iniquity, and this is their work while here; so that although it still cleaves unto them, yet they are not sitting down contented in it, but endeavouring the separation for altogether. Thus the charge is effectual, in so far as they go farther and farther from it. Here there is another,

Question, But is it not often seen, that Christians are farther from iniquity at first than ever they are afterwards? hence many complain that their days, after a long standing in religion, are not found to be by far so good as when they were but young Christians. In answer to this, I observe,

1. That there are not a few who, though never found converts, yet had awakening grace at their first setting out in a profession, making a mighty reel among their affections, and a great change on their life; which wearing away by degrees, they settled on a lifeless empty form of godliness, and so were farther from iniquity then than ever before. But this will not prove it to be so with the truly godly. I observe,

2. That Christians of a long standing in religion have their sleeping and decaying times, and young Christians also have theirs. In Song, v. 2, we find the spouse asleep after great manifestations; and in Matth. xxv. 5, we find the wise, as well as the foolish virgins, slumbering and sleeping. And if we compare the sleeping days of aged Christians with the waking days of those who are only young, no doubt the latter has the advantage of the former, even as a working boy is in less danger of the enemy's surprise, than a sleeping man. But since the power of grace effectually stirs up both from their spiritual slumbers, it is but just the comparison pass betwixt them, in the waking frame. I observe,

3. That there is a difference betwixt the bulk of religion, and the solidity and weight of it; the vehement commotions, and its firmness and rootedness. Young Christians may be of more bulk than the old in respect of many glistering affections, arising from the new-

ness of the thing, which are mixed with it, and afterwards go off. But with old Christians, though there be less bulk, it is more solid and weighty; as the gold, the oftener it is in the fire, is the more refined, though not so bulky. Young Christians have more vehement affections, but the old have them more regular, rooted, and firm; thus the old is better. The longer one stands in Christianity, certainly he has the more experience of the goodness of God, and of the corruption of his own heart, and of the danger from spiritual enemies. Hence he must be more resolute in solid serious dependence upon the Lord of all; more humble, self-denied, and more firm against temptation; and, in one word, have more of a regular composed tenderness, with respect to sin and duty. And herein lies the stress of departing from iniquity: 1 John, v. 3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."

Young soldiers may rush upon the enemy with greater briskness, but the old ones stand the ground best, and abide the shock more firmly. Wherefore, let no Christians of long standing in religion be discouraged as if they were not departing from iniquity, because they do not make such visible progress as when religion was new to them, if there remain with them a rooted tenderness with respect to anything that may be displeasing to God, with a sincere purpose and endeavour to keep a conscience avoid of offence towards God and towards man: 2 Cor. i. 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Add to this, a serious longing to be freed from the body of death, Rom. vii. 24.; and to be perfected in holiness, Phil. iii. 13. 14. For as the progress of the ship in the main ocean is not so discernible as when it was coming off from the shore, tho' it may move as fast; so it is no wonder that the progress of the Christian of long standing be not so visible as at the first; or as the growth of a tree the first year is more discerned than after, so it may be with the Christian.

Having thus shown how far the charge is effectual in this life, we add upon this head,

That it is effectual in all who are the Lord's people, at death; and this in so far as that then they perfectly depart from sin, and sin from them. They come then to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. There is a great difference betwixt the godly and the wicked in life, and a still greater at death. As the wicked do in life hold fast their iniquities amidst all the means of justification and sanctification offered them; so at death all these means are

removed for ever out of their sight; and thus their iniquities meet upon them, to prey on their souls for ever. Then sin is settled in its full power in their souls, as on its own base. No more hopes nor possibility of sanctification; and the several pieces of guilt, as cords of death, are twisted about them for ever. As sin in the godly is in their life loosed at the root, so at their death it is rooted up; as in life they depart from it sincerely, so at death perfectly. The body of death goes with the death of the body, that as death came in by sin, so sin may go out by death. Now, sin is in the godly as the leprosy in the walls of the house, which, therefore, being taken down, the leprosy is removed; when the gracious soul drops the mantle of the body, it will, at the same instant drop all the uncleanness cleaving to it. Amen.

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THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

## SERMON IV.

2 Tim. ii. 19,

*And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Having, in the preceding discourse, shown that this charge is effectual with all who are the Lord's, both in this life and at death, we now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To evince the truth of the doctrine, that the charge is effectual in all who belong to God. With this view I would have you to consider the following things.

1. Consider that it was for this purpose that they were elected; Eph. i. 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before him in love." All whom God has chosen to life, are chosen to holiness; so that the decree of election in their favour, secures their departure from iniquity. If a person had determined to save a certain number of madmen, going about to kill themselves, with knives in their hands, the resolution to save them would import the taking the knives out of their hands; so here, reprobates may get their lusts kept, but the elect shall not. Wherefore, as sure as the elect cannot perish, and the Lord will lose none who are his, so sure shall all who are his depart from iniquity. There is no separating of the means and the end, which, in God's decree, are firmly joined together. Life is the end, departing from iniquity the means; there-

fore, they who are ordained to life shall infallibly depart from it. As sure as the purpose of God cannot be broken or disappointed, so sure shall they who are his depart from iniquity. It is God's purpose in election, to bring them out of their sin, to everlasting life: Eph. i. 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before him in love."

This purpose cannot be broken, for says God, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. xlvi. 10. Therefore, they shall depart from iniquity; and whoever holds it fast, are strangers to the grace of God. Consider that,

2. It is the end of their redemption by Christ. Why did Christ give himself for those who are his? It was that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. Why gave he himself for his church? It was that "he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water, by the word," Eph. v. 26. He came to save them, but from what? From their sins, Matth. i. 21. Sin had a double hold of those who were his; it held their consciences, by the cords of guilt; and held their heart, will, and affections, by the interest it had got there. Christ shed his blood, by the efficacy thereof to loose the former, and procured the influences of his Spirit, who, by his indwelling might loose the latter.

Those for whom Christ did not die will continue in their sins, and perish in them. They are not willing to part with them, and the influences of the Spirit are not procured for them to make them willing. Had Christ been to save sinners in their sins, then those who will not be saved from their sins, might have been saved from death. But it is not so. Those for whom Christ died, shall infallibly depart from iniquity; and such are all those who are the Lord's; John x. 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Otherwise, the design of Christ's death is frustrated; he died in vain, and all the promises of a seed, made by the Father to his Son, in the covenant, turn to nothing; to imagine which, is blasphemous.

Christ bare a good will to those who were his from eternity, and and would have them made happy. But they were unholy, therefore he must redeem them from their iniquity, by his blood; otherwise, the gates of the city would have remained closed for ever on them. And now, that the ransom of the blood of the Son of God is paid, is it possible that the prisoners can remain undelivered? Some may be apt to say, O! will ever Christ sanctify such an unholy creature as I am? I will surely perish by the hand of my lusts, and will never get free of them. Why, poor soul, if this be thy ex-

ercise, to depart from thy iniquity, it is an evidence thou art his; and it is his honour and interest to make thee holy, and deliver thee from the dominion and power of thy powerful lusts, in so far as he shed his blood for this end. And, however worthless thou art in thyself, thou art dear bought, and therefore must not, canst not, be lost.

3. Consider, that it is the end of their effectual calling. They are called to be saints, Rom. i. 7. The world lies in wickedness. Those who are the Lord's by election, lie among them, till the effectual call come, which brings them out from among them; "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," 2 Cor. vi. 17. This call is necessarily connected with election, and it can never be effectual without the soul's being brought to depart from iniquity; "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. viii. 30. The conversion of all the elect, their regeneration, their translation from the power of darkness, are infallibly secured, and consequently their departing from iniquity. For what is conversion, but turning from sin unto God? and regeneration, but arising from the death in sin?

4. Consider that it is the end of all providences. Providence has an eye on all the children of men, but has a special eye on those who are the Lord's people. Favourable dispensations are cords of a man, to draw sinners from their iniquity: Luke i. 74, 75, "That he would grant us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Afflictive dispensations are scourges, to drive them from their iniquity; Isa. xxvii. 9, "By this therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin:" Heb. xii. 10, "He chasteneth for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." True, they are not effectual on many; mercies do not allure them, judgments do not affright them. But wisdom is justified of her children. And can it be imagined that they shall not be effectual to them?

5. Consider, that it is the end of all ordinances. Wherefore does the Lord send the gospel to sinners, but that they may depart from iniquity? Titus ii. 11, 12, "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The word is designed for the sanctification of souls; John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The promises, the threatenings, the doctrines, all lead away from sin. The sacraments of the New Testament are also appointed for this same end. In a word, all gospel ordinances

whatever, Eph. iv. 12. They are all "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These will have their effect on those who are his, however they be in vain to others.

*Lastly*, Consider, that since all who shall be saved shall depart from iniquity, and all who are the Lord's shall be saved, it is evident, that all who are his shall depart from iniquity. Such as continue in their sin can have no communion with God here, much less hereafter, Psalm v. 4—6, and Psalm xv. throughout. No sooner did the reprobate angels depart from holiness to sin, but God thrust them down to hell, 2 Peter ii. 4. Adam was driven from the tree of life, on his sinning, Gen. iii. 22. Who then can expect to see the face of God in heaven, without departing from iniquity? We now come,

III. To make a practical improvement of the whole;—and this,

*First*, In an use of information.—This subject informs us,

1. Whence the success of the Gospel is derived. We see it has its effect on some, in turning them from their sins unto God, while others, having the same means of grace, are untouched by them. Trace this to the spring-head, and it must be ascribed, neither to the free-will of the party, the piety or parts of the preacher, but to the eternal love of God terminating on some. There is a time of loves set in the counsel of God, respecting all the elect; and when this time comes, they shall infallibly answer the call.—We may see,

2. That the unsuccessfulness of the gospel, barrenness and impenitency under the means of grace, are matters which draw very deep. Men think little of disobeying God's charge, sounded continually in their ears, by the gospel; think little of going on in sins, from which they are charged to part; but did they consider that the charge must be infallibly complied with, by all who are the Lord's, their own sitting of it would be a terror to themselves. For, in so far as they comply not with it, so far they show themselves not to belong to God. Where God has much people, the gospel will have much success.—We may learn,

3. That iniquity is that abominable thing which God hates. It is the greatest of all evils, and therefore, as it is that thing which God sets himself particularly against, so we in a special manner should set ourselves against it. Poverty, meanness, and contempt in the world, God suffers in those who are dear to him; but he will not suffer sin to have dominion over them, and at length will quite expel it from those who are his. He will not bear with it in his own, as he hates it for itself.—We are informed,

4. That there is a divine power comes along with the charge, to

all who are the Lord's people, when once the time of love is come. This is that which makes them depart, while others hold fast their iniquity: Isa. liii. 1, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The elect of God are as much dead in trespasses and sins as others are; sin has the same dominion over them as over others. But with the word the Spirit enters into them, and brings them away from the tents of sin, causes them to rise up out of their graves, while others lie still in them.—We may learn,

*Lastly*, That departing from iniquity is absolutely necessary to evince that we belong to God, because all such do depart from iniquity. It is the fruit of election and conversion; and so the great evidence of interest in God's eternal love, and his present favour.—For understanding this, three things are to be noticed.

(1.) That a person's being in his sin, still under the dominion of it, unsanctified, unholy, is a certain evidence of his being in a state of enmity with God, in a state of wrath, and that he does not actually belong to God, but to Satan. One may pretend faith in Christ, and a covenant interest in God, while he is going on in a course of sin. But his pretences are vain, his works disprove his faith, his unholy life discovers his graceless state: James ii. 17, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

(2.) That a person's being still in his sin, under its dominion, will not, while he lives, prove him to be none of God's elect, excepting only in the case of the unpardonable sin, which is most rare. The reason is, that the charge is effectual in all the elect, yet it may be long in taking its effect on some, as in the case of the thief on the cross. So that while there is life, there is hope. This I note, to baffle that temptation, with which Satan attacks some, namely, That they are not elected, and therefore they need not set their minds towards religion, for it will not do with them. This is barefaced reasoning from hell; for be your case never so hopeless, though ye be quite graceless, and this never so long continued in, while you do not obstinately, and altogether maliciously, reject salvation by Christ, it cannot prove you to be none of God's elect; for at the eleventh hour you may be called. Yet,

(3.) Without departing from iniquity, no person can certainly know he is elected, or that he belongs to God. By this, indeed, a person may know it, 2 Peter i. 10: but without it, no man can; for God does not allow us, nor can we at first hand go and read our names in the book of life. We must learn it by sanctification, which is the fruit of election, by which we come to know both our election and our effectual calling.—We may improve the subject,

*Secondly*, In an use of trial.

Hereby you may try whether you be the Lord's covenanted people or not. This may be known by your departing from iniquity, or your not departing. Here, to assist you, we shall mention the two following marks:—

Mark 1. If you are departing from iniquity, there will be a sincere endeavour after universal obedience, Psalm cxix. 6; aiming to please God in all things, and not indulging yourself in any known sin, being content to know, in all cases, what is sin and what is duty. The truly godly will set themselves against the first motions of sin, Rom. vii. 7; against secret sins, Psalm xix. 12; even against that sin which most easily besets them, Psalm xviii. 23; and will witness against self, in various shapes, Matth. v. 3.

Mark 2. If you are departing from iniquity, you will be wearying and groaning under the remains of sin, Rom. vii. 26. However much the hypocrite may content himself with as much grace as seems necessary to secure heaven to him, yet the godly man is going on, and pressing forwards towards perfection, though he cannot reach it; and looks on the remains of sin as iron fetters, which he would fain be quit of, that he may be holy, as God is holy; and perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect.—We may improve the subject,

*Lastly*, In an use of exhortation.

We beseech you, O sinners! to depart from iniquity. You have dwelt too long in the tents of sin. You are called now to arise and depart from all your sins, freely to part with them, never to return to them, but to be still departing farther and farther from them. The exhortation concerns both saints and sinners.

There are three motives, which the text affords us to prevail with sinners in drawing them from their sins. These are,—the evil of sin,—the necessary connection betwixt a person's departing from it and their belonging to God, and the obligation lying on sinners to part with it, from their naming the name of Christ. We shall consider these separately, as in their nature important and weighty; and O that we could improve them, so as to draw you all from your sins. We begin with,

Mot. 1. Sin is an evil, a great evil, from which you are called to depart. Sinners are deceived with an appearance of goodness, of profit, or of pleasure in their sins. But, God knows, it is the worst of evils, and therefore from it by all means God will have his own to depart. O that I could draw the monstrous evil in its own colours, to bring you all from it to holiness! Could you get a genuine sight of it, you would run from it as from a fire, as from hell fire; Rom. xii. 9. "Abhor that which is evil." Sin is the greatest evil. This will appear, if the following things are attended to. Sin is an evil.

1. In the eyes of God: Jer. xliv. 4, "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate." God, who knows all things, and cannot be deceived with fair appearances, looks on this, which men naturally set their hearts on, as the worst of ills. Oh! shall we not think of it as God does? Consider,

(1.) It is the only thing which he condemns, and he everywhere condemns it in his word. The world cries out on many things which are not sin, but God on nothing else. Many would persuade themselves, that God looks on their sins as they do. But this he takes as an affront to his holiness: Psalm l. 21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Look to his word, which is the indication of his his mind; and there you will see he never speaks good of sin.

(2.) It is the only thing which he pursues with his wrath, and he does this wherever it is found. It is the enemy he pursues through the whole creation, wherever it appears. It entered in among the angels, and fixed itself in the reprobate ones; wrath immediately pursued it, and tumbled them down to the pit; "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment," 2 Pet. ii. 4. It got place with mankind in paradise; and wrath was at his heels there; Adam's prosperous state was quickly turned into misery. The very ground on which the sinner treads, is cursed for its sake. The sinner, in his sinful state, is in a state of wrath. It abides on him, John iii. 36. The sky never clears on him, while he is a sinner. Even with his own children, God writes his indignation on it; John xii. 24, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers?—Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?" The earth is made to groan under it; and when the end comes, the defiled creation has to go through the fire to purge it. But above all, see how he pursued sin in his own Son, though it was only on him by imputation; Rom. viii. 32, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." The sins of the elect met on him, and therefore the sorrows of wrath met in him, and left him not, till they brought him to the dust of death.

(3.) Departing from it is the only testimony of his creatures' love to him which he requires, and nothing less can be accepted. He does not seek rivers of oil, nor other costly sacrifices: "But he hath shewed thee, O man! what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" If he call them to lay down their lives for him, it is only in the way of their standing off from sin; otherwise it is not

acceptable, nor required, but his law is, Suffer any thing rather than sin. Behold it in one word, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," Psalm xcvii. 10.

2. Sin is an evil, and a great evil, in the eyes of the truly godly. Whenever the eyes of any person are opened by grace, then immediately they are of this mind; while the rest of the deluded world hug the serpent in their bosom, they are for flying from it at any rate. If they lose this opinion of it at any time, it is owing to the loss of their light, their falling asleep. But in their settled judgment, it is the worst of evils. For,

(1.) Of all evils it has lain nearest their hearts, and produced the heaviest complaints and groans. Psalm li. 3; Lam. xiv. 17. Hear Paul's complaint; Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Did ever persecutions, prisons, reproaches, or all the ills he suffered, draw such a complaint from him? In tribulations he rejoiced, in a prison he sang; but in the fetters of the body of death, he groans like a dying man.

(2.) Sin or suffer being put to their choice, they have always, when themselves, choosed to suffer rather than sin: Acts xx. 24, "But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." It is true, a godly man may sometimes be bemisted, so as not to see a thing to be sin which is sin; nay, sometimes, in a hurry of temptation, to avoid suffering, he may fall into sin against light; but otherwise, by divine grace, they will choose poverty, imprisonment, banishment, death, rather than sin; even the greatest temporal evil, rather than the least sin. Thus the cloud of witnesses gave their testimony. From these they did not "accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection," Heb. xi. 35.

3. Sin is indeed in its own nature and properties the greatest of all evils.—To make this evident, consider,

(1.) That of all things sin is most contrary to the nature of God, who is the chief good, and therefore it is the chief evil, Lev. xxvi. It is walking contrary to God; it is worse than all penal evils; these met in Jesus Christ, who was God as well as man, but sin was not found in him; Heb. vii. 26, "For such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." God owns himself the author of penal evils, but it is blasphemy to father sin upon him. This fights against God; and, as one says, the sinner, so far as in him lies, destroys the nature of God, dethrones him,

and strikes at his very being. God, swearing by his holiness, swears by himself; but nothing is so opposite to holiness as sin is, nothing can be more or as much so: nay, it is the very thing which makes the devil evil, and therefore it is more evil itself than even the devil. Consider,

(2.) That sin is most contrary to the rational nature. Right reason condemns it; and no reason approves it, but as blinded and prejudiced. It degrades men, and makes them like beasts, the filthiest of beasts, dogs and swine, 2 Pet. ii. 22; more beastly than the beasts themselves; Isa. i. 3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Thus the wicked man is a vile man, though never so honourable, Psalm xv. 4. Hence it is, that although there are some who glory in their shame, yet sin is such a work of darkness, that no person ordinarily is disposed to father the monstrous brat. Consider,

(3.) That sin is the deformity of the soul. That is the seat of sin, which is the noblest part of man. But it is the deformity of that part; and the corruption of what is the best is certainly the worst evil. Even a deformity in the face is worse than in another part; a bloody man on a throne is worse than such a person on a dunghill. Thus the ill of sin appears in what it does to the soul; it defaces God's image there, and so mars its beauty; Psalm xiv. 3, "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doth good, no not one." No running sore, canker, or gangrene, is comparable to it, for these do but prey on the body, sin on the soul. It makes men unlike God, and like the devil. God is holy, just, and good; the devil is unholy and wicked; and so is the sinner going on in his sin. It makes a person like the devil, as a child is to his father, John viii. 44, therefore both go to one place in the end; Matth. xxv. 41, "Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Consider,

(4.) That sin is a hereditary evil, and these are the worst of evils, the hardest to be cured. We were born with it; Psalm li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is woven into our very natures, it cannot be taken away without a miracle of grace; even such a power is necessary as is required in raising the dead, and quickening them. The whole man must be born again, new moulded, new framed, ere the person can depart from iniquity. Consider,

(5.) That sin is the mother of all those evils which ever were, are, or shall be; the teeming womb of all mischief. What cast the

angels out of heaven, Adam out of Paradise? What deluged the old world, and burned Sodom? It was sin. Of all the evils on soul and body to which man is liable, sin leads the van. Behold how death, in numberless shapes, has overflowed the world! What a flood of miseries is overflowing mankind, kingdoms, churches, families, persons, souls, bodies! What has opened the sluice of these? Rom. v. 12, affords the answer, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." There is never a sigh nor a groan in this world, under any hardship whatsoever, but it rises from the sting of this serpent; and it has filled hell with groans which will last for ever. Consider,

(6.) That where sin is removed in its guilt and power, the greatest evils cannot harm us; 2 Pet. iii. 13, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Diseases, crosses, death itself, without it, is like a serpent without a sting, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. The severe lashes of the just judge of heaven and earth, are turned into the rods of a loving father, Psalm lxxxix. 31, 32. Death is but the falling asleep, and dying only the shadow of death. Nay, they shall do us good; Rom. viii. 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Out of the most dark, troubled, and confounding case, God will raise a beautiful frame. Every stone cast at them shall be a precious stone, sanctified for their good. Consider,

(7.) That whatever sin is in force, it not only strengthens other evils, but blasts and poisons all that good which a person enjoys. It not only arms diseases, death, and hell, against a man, but turns his very blessings into curses; Mal. ii. 2, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." In all the enjoyments and comforts of a sinner out of Christ, there is death in the pot. One man's crosses ruin him, another man's prosperity ensnares him, and proves his ruin, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Nay, the very means of grace are a savour of death unto death unto some, 2 Cor. ii. 16. What is the reason why sin poisons the fountain? Thus, be the waters sweet or bitter, they are killing. Consider,

(8.) That sin is the most painful and tormenting evil, when once the pain of it is raised, and the poison begins sensibly to operate; Prov. xviii. 14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" It is true, that it is so long in

working with some, that it may never thus work till in hell they lift up their eyes; but O how dreadful must it then be! Conscience is a tender part; and this, sin torments. What torment was Cain in, when his conscience got upon him! It made Felix tremble, Belshazzar's knees to smite one against another; it involved Judas in utter despair, so as to make away with himself. See Job xx. 12—16. Consider,

(9.) That sin is a most deadly evil; Rom. vi. 23, "The wages of sin is death." It brought temporal death into the world; and the body of man, which by its creation was not liable to death, it made mortal. But more than this, it is the cause of spiritual death. It kills the soul, separating it from God and communion, with him, and makes many a man dead while he lives, so that his living body is but a coffin to a dead soul, Eph. ii. 1. And, finally, it brings on eternal death. Consider,

(10.) That sin is a most infectious evil. No plague nor pestilence is so dangerous. Many persons, in times of a raging plague, have been preserved. But as for the plague of sin, when once it seized Eve, she infected Adam, and he all his posterity. And now the world is a pest-house, where not one is quite free. Some are under the cure of grace, and in the way of recovery; but the most part are pining away in their iniquity, and every one of them infecting another more and more; Eccl. ix. 18, "One sinner destroys much good." This one sinner may have the blood of many at his door, whom he has ruined by his advice, carelessness, and evil example. Consider,

(11.) That the giving up of a sinner to sin, is the concluding stroke which God gives him, so that it is the worst thing a person can meet with. Here I would have you more particularly to consider,—that when God in wrath gives a man over in this life, he leaves him, and gives him up to his sin. God deals with sinners to part with their sins, they will not; God's offers are slighted, then, as in Psalm lxxxi. 12, "He gives them up to their own hearts' lust; and they walk in their own counsels." He is at much pains with them by providences and ordinances, but nothing does with them; then in anger he gives them over: Ezek. xxiv. 13, "In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest on thee." Thus, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," Hos. iv. 17. Of the heathen world it is said, "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections," Rom. i. 26. We read of one who was given up to the devil, that he was again recovered. But where find ye a man given up to himself, to his lusts, reclaimed? Wherefore better be given up to the devil,

than to sin. Fearful sentence! "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." Consider, when at death the impenitent sinner is carried out of the world into the pit, there is no more endeavours to separate betwixt him and his sin. In life he would depart from God, and so his doom is, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Then his sins are left to prey upon his soul for ever; no more pardon, no more sanctification; Prov. xiv. 32, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." God strives with the man in life to part him and his sins, but he will not part from them; so the whirlwind of death rises, and carries both away together to the pit. Consider,

(12.) When God has brought in all his elect to himself, and the last man of them has left the tents of sin, then shall the world be at an end. The sheep shall be separated from the goats, the sinners driven away in their wickedness to hell; this world defiled by sin shall be burnt up; and they, and sin, with all its effects, shut up in hell for ever, Rev. xx. 14, 15. Then shall there be new heavens and a new earth, but no sin there, 2 Pet. iii. 13. It shall be settled in hell for ever, as on its own base. Sin must be an evil, a great evil: For,

4. If you will continue in sin, of all things Satan loves most to have it so. It gratifies the enemy of mankind most; and this in two things, on which he is most particularly set.

(1.) The dishonour of God. Satan is a rebel against God, who has not the smallest hopes of peace, and is utterly desperate, therefore rages and maliciously sets himself against God, sinning against God himself, and tempting men to sin and continue in it, that he may have the satisfaction of their dishonouring God, and despising his Son; thus grieving his Spirit, and trampling on his laws. Satan is set upon,

(2.) The ruin of souls; 1 Pet. v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." He loves to keep them in subjection to himself, that he may reign freely in their hearts, which will be as long as they are under the dominion of sin; and to have them companions with him in eternal misery; which he is sure to accomplish if he can keep them in their sins. I come now to

Mot. 2. To prevail with you in departing from iniquity, observe this is necessary from your belonging to God, your departing from sin. Whoso are his, infallibly do depart from iniquity, whatever others do. This has been proved before.—Now, upon this consider, the weight that lies here, whether a person belongs to God or not. You need to have this cleared, whose you are, whether the Lord's people or not. For consider,

(1.) Your state for time turns upon this point. All the world is divided into two parties; one belonging to God by covenant and dedication, Heb. viii. 10; another to Satan, the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. See them distinguished, 1 John v. 19, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The one is the family of heaven, the other Satan's family. If you belong to the former, you are justified, adopted, all is yours, and ye are Christ's. If to the latter, ye are in a state of wrath and enmity against God. Consider,

(2.) Your state for eternity turns upon this point. If ye be the Lord's, ye shall be for ever happy with him. Your names will be found written in the book of life. If not, your names will not be found there; and see the doom of such; Rev. xx. 15, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." You shall infallibly evidence, by your departing from iniquity, that you are the Lord's, Rev. xiv. 1—5. Sanctification is an infallible proof of election and justification, and an infallible pledge of glorification. It is a middle link of the indissoluble chain which begins with election and ends with glorification, Rom. viii. 29, 30; Thess. ii. 13. The spirit of holiness is God's seal upon them that are his, by which they come to be owned and discerned to be his; Eph. i. 13, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." But as long as you depart not from sin, it is a positive evidence that you belong not to God by accepting of the covenant, Jer. xxxii. 30. Your cleaving to sin is an evidence you are not united to Christ, and you can have no positive concluding evidence that you belong to God by election. It is but at best a peradventure it may be. And as always the longer that a person continues in sin, there are less the hopes of his recovery, so there is the less probability of his belonging to the election of grace. And if you die in your sin, it will be beyond dispute, that you do not belong to God at all.

Depart, then, from iniquity, as ever you would have any concern for shewing yourselves to be the Lord's. Upon this let me ask you, Is it a matter of indifference to you whether you be the Lord's or not? Truly this is the language of souls careless about their salvation, and particularly about their sanctification. It is declared to you, that all who are the Lord's depart from iniquity. Yet you are careless about your departing from it. This speaks your indifference. I would further ask you, can you ever be happy if you be not the Lord's? How can you live without his favour, living on his ground, and at his cost? Acts xvii. 25, "He giveth to all, life and breath, and all things." How can you think to look the king of terrors in

the face, without the favour of the King of heaven, which you can never have, while you do not depart from iniquity? Rom. i. 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." I would ask you, *lastly*, Is it not a miserable offence against your own souls, to dispute away any saving relation betwixt God and you? Every new disobedience to this heavenly charge, is a new argument against yourselves, that you are not his. This charge in the gospel is addressed to all to whom the gospel comes; it is like a fanning wind separating the wheat from the chaff. By it the grace of God brings away the elect out of the tents of sin, leaving others to perish there. What a dismal thought, then, is it to be left, time after time, in iniquity! I come now to urge the

3. And last motive, which is, that obligation which is lying on those who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. The Christian profession obliges all who make it to be holy, and to walk as Christians. And here I would consider,

1*st*, The obligation which lies on all to depart from sin who name the name of Christ, who are Christians by profession, as we all are.

2*dly*, The obligation which specially lies on communicants. I would consider,

1*st*, The obligation which lies on all to depart from sin who name the name of Christ, who are Christians by profession, as we all are. Here consider,

1. That your baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, by which you were to be engaged to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to obey the Lord Jesus, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. This is a seal of God's covenant, to which you have thereby consented. And since you bear the badge of Christianity, you ought to live Christian and holy lives. And God will treat you as covenant-breakers if you do not. Consider,

2. The author of your profession, from whom you take your name; Acts xi. 26, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." From Christ we are called Christians. And pity it is that ever those who profess Christ should be called by the names of sinful and wicked men. You know those who are named for men, are so named, because they are followers of them. And so the name Christian signifies a follower of Christ, one who follows that way which Christ taught. Now, consider him, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession Jesus Christ, Heb. iii. 1. What was the author of your profession? He was holy, Heb. vii. 26. His name is a name of holiness: anointed of God, for a Prophet, Priest, and King. A Christian indeed partakes of the anointing of the Holy

Spirit: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," 1 John ii. 20. They are made kings and priests unto God and his Father, Rev. i. 6. Now, how does a sinful life agree with the holy name, example and doctrine of Christ? Consider,

3. The faith and religion you profess. Surely the principles of our religion are holy, and teach us to depart from iniquity, and give no allowance to live in sin. Even reason says, men ought not to give, nor can they rationally live, in contradiction to their profession and its principles. Other religions allow something sinful, but the Christian religion, proceeding from him who is holiness and truth itself, condemns every even the least evil; and therefore Christians by their profession are obliged to depart from iniquity. Consider,

*Lastly*, The end of your faith and profession, the way to which it directs, namely, heaven, which is a holy place. The gospel has discovered life and immortality, 2 Tim. i. 10. A happy state after this life, where holiness is perfected, Heb. xii. 23. And meanwhile it directs to a life agreeable to this holy and happy state; for it "teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world," Tit. ii. 12. Have you no hopes, no expectations of heaven? If you have, surely you ought to depart from iniquity; for it cannot be expected that that holy place is for dogs and swine, for such as are strangers to holiness here.

2*dly*, I would consider the obligations to depart from iniquity which lie on communicants in a special manner. You have in a very solemn manner named the holy name of Jesus, by partaking of the sacrament of our Lord's body and blood. Let this then engage you to depart from iniquity. Consider,

1. That these additional vows of God are upon you to depart from iniquity. You have lifted up your hand to God, and you cannot go back. The terms of the Christian life were told you, and you have, after deliberation, engaged yourselves to the Lord. Beware that after vows you begin to make inquiry, Luke ix. 62. Consider,

2. That religion will be wounded by you if you do not depart from iniquity; Rom. ii. 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." You will be accounted betrayers of Christ, for you will give false testimony against his way in favour of sin, as if you had tried the way of religion, and after trial found cause to cast it off. And therefore, as you would not more than ever dishonour the Lord and his way, depart from iniquity. Consider,

3. That you will be great losers if you do not depart from iniquity. You will lose all the pains which you have been at in religion: 2

John 8, "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought." It may be, you have been at some pains to get something, and have done much in the way of God, but one thing lacking will mar all. You will lose your souls, for it is only they who depart from iniquity, so as never to return to it, that are saved: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." Backsliding is most dangerous: Heb. x. 48, "If any man draw back, my soul," says God, "shall have no pleasure in him." The very setting off once in the Lord's way obliges to hold forward. They can never sin at such a cheap rate as before; heavier vengeance abides backsliders, and a fall from heaven's threshold is worst of all.

Now, the Lord is saying to the sinners in Zion, as Jerem. vi. 8, "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem! lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited." He is threatening to depart from the generation, since they will not depart from iniquity; and sad will the departure be: Hosea ix. 12, "Woe also be to them when I depart from them." There are three sad consequences of God's departure when provoked to it, with which we are threatened this day.—There is,

(1.) Confusion in the church, the breaking of the staves of beauty and bands. There is a melancholy account of this consequence of the Lord's departure, Rev. viii. 7, 8. We have already felt the former, and were threatened with the Lord's making, in his wrath, the whole mountain of his house, a burning mountain with the fire of division. A sad sight it will be, come when it will, however fond of it many have appeared. Zion's work will be heavy work, when Zion's builders are, by the Lord's anger, made like Babel builders. —There is,

(2.) Calamity in the state. Many perhaps would little value what should become of the church, if they might otherwise live at ease. But God's departure from a generation often brings nations into the deepest perplexity and distress, 2 Chron. xv. 3—6. When God departs from a generation to see what their end will be, it will be a sad end, Deut. xxii. 19, 20. There is,

(3.) The ruin of many souls and bodies also. When God so leaves a generation, there are many snares for the soul. Confusion in the church brings deadness and darkness on, and makes havoc of the case of many souls. Calamity in the state, which removes peace far away, tends always to the ruining of temporal concerns, and often of men's souls concerns also.

O then depart from iniquity, as ever you would that God should not depart from you, nor from the generation! Our iniquities are the Achans in the camp which trouble us; the Jonah in our ship

which threatens to raise the storm. God has been long calling by his word and providence to us to depart from iniquity, and reform. But, instead of this, the generation has been filling up the cup of their iniquity, and want by some one thing or other to make it run over. But whatever befal us, departing from sin will be your security; Isaiah iii. 10, "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." God's way is the only way of safety; Prov. x. 9, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he that perverteth his ways shall be known." And a good conscience will be a feast in midst of trouble, 2 Cor. i. 12. Whereas an evil conscience, made such by continuing in sin, will be a bad companion at any time, more especially in the evil day. If any should propose this

*Question*, What shall we do that we may depart from iniquity? I answer, Impress your spirits with your own sinfulness. Consider your sinful nature, Psalm li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Observe how it spreads itself through the whole of your hearts and lives; Isaiah lxiv. 6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities as the whirlwind have taken us away." How contrary is it to God's nature and law, how inconsistent with your interests for time and eternity! Make application to Christ by faith for its removal. To his blood to remove the guilt of sin, 1 John i. 7. To his Spirit to break the power of it, and to sanctify you. Faith is the great mean of sanctification; "Purifying their hearts by faith," Acts xv. 9. We exhort you,

*Lastly*, To watch. Be ever on your watch-tower. Your spiritual enemies are still about your hands. Watch, therefore, against all occasions, temptations, and appearances of evil. Improve the season of duties. Study to be always doing good, and so your hand will be filled with other work. When departing from evil you will do good, you will seek peace, and pursue it earnestly. Amen.

## THE INWARD FRAME SHOULD CORRESPOND WITH THE OUTWARD PROFESSION.*

## SERMON V.

DEUT. v. 29,

*O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever.*

THAT dreadful appearance which God made on mount Sinai, in the giving of the law, and that effect it had upon the Israelites, Moses here puts them in mind of. When the Lord spoke with a great and terrible voice out of the darkness and fire, the people were affrighted, and they see their absolute need of a mediator, and therefore desire Moses would mediate betwixt God and them; and in this event they promise all obedience. The Lord gives his verdict concerning this, which consists of two parts.

1. That the words were very good. If words could have proved them saints, they would have been among the foremost. If promises could have passed for performances, they had wanted neither faith nor good works; ver. 28, "They have well said all that they have spoken." They have said two things;

(1.) They had desired a mediator, ver. 27, "Go thou near," said they to Moses, "and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." They saw so much of the majesty of God, and of their own sinfulness, that they beg of God he would not deal with them immediately, but by a mediator; and this was the great end in giving the law on mount Sinai, and that with so much terror, Deut. xviii. 15.—18.

(2.) They promised obedience, that they would take the law out of Moses' mouth, and perform it; that they would no less highly esteem it as coming by his hand, than if God should thunder it with the greatest terror into their ears. What could look liker faith and obedience, according to the Old Testament dispensation? What could look liker accepting of the great Mediator in all his offices, according to that dispensation of the covenant, wherein types and figures of him who was to come did so much abound? How ready seem they to sit down at the feet of a prophet and learn?

* This and the following discourses were delivered in 1709.

So that upon this the Lord promised Christ under that very notion, Deut. xviii. 18. How plainly do they take with guilt, and stand as criminals who have nothing to say on their own defence, acknowledge their need, and profess their desire of an intercessor, being unable to stand before the Lord without a shelter, or on their own legs. How readily do they subject themselves to the laws of their King, and stoop to take on his yoke without any exception whatsoever? But all is not gold that glitters, the heart of man seldom holds foot with the tongue.

2. The other part of the verdict follows in the text; "O that there were such an heart in them!" By which he discovers their hypocrisy, and precipitancy, their tongues running before their hearts in their engaging themselves to the Lord. The Lord speaks thus after the manner of men, so that they who would hence conclude, that man's will by nature is such, as that it is of himself flexible, either to spiritual good or evil, while the Lord stands by as an idle spectator, and puts to no hand of power, may as well conclude, that God hath eyes and hands of flesh, and that he who is not the son of Man that he should repent, and with whom there is no variableness, may even with propriety repent as to what he has done. Inefficacious wishing, properly understood, argues imperfection. (Hebrew, who will give their heart to be such in them?) Now, it is certain, God can give such a heart; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart also will I give you." And if he will do it, who can hinder him? Job xi. 10. —This declaration therefore imports,

(1.) That such an heart was not in them, for all their fair words and high pretences; that though they looked well outwardly, yet within they were naught. They had learned to speak better than they were wont; but though they had got the new tongue, they had but the old heart still; Deut. xxix. 4, "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." When they were in Egypt, they were sunk into stupidity, the instructions of the patriarchs had worn out of their minds, they had almost forgotten their fall in Adam, and what sin was; and though God had made the promise to Abraham, yet they were now grown proud and secure. And though sin, and also death, were reigning over them, yet being without the law, to evidence sin and death to their consciences, they would not charge themselves with it, and so found no need of a Mediator, Rom. v. 13—20. But now the law being proclaimed with so great terror, laid their peacock-feathers a little; but though they had more knowledge of their sin and misery than before, yet they had still the old heart. This declaration imports,

(2.) That such an heart should have been in them, it was their duty to have it, God required it of them: "Make to yourselves a new heart." God requires the conformity of the heart, as well as of the conversation, to his will. It imports,

(3.) That the want of such an heart was a dead fly in all their engagements, which made all the ointment to stink; "O that there were such an heart in them!" The chief thing is wanting still, they have not yet brought up their heart to their work. It imports,

(4.) The great excellency and worth of such an heart. The Lord speaks honourably of it, as that which would bear weight in the balance of the sanctuary. It is pleasing to the Lord, it is God's delight; they want only this to make them happy. For illustrating this subject, we shall propose and consider the following doctrines.

Doctrine I. That men often make what ought to be the most solemn transactions with the Lord about their souls' concerns, but solemn trifling with him.

Doctrine II. That a heart sincerely and suitably corresponding with the profession of a covenanting people, is a most valuable and excellent thing.

Doctrine III. That the work of covenanting with the Lord is slight work, when it is not heart work. Or, in other words, solemn covenanting with the Lord is but solemn trifling with him, when the work of covenanting is not heart work.

We begin with

Doctrine I. That men often make what ought to be the most solemn transactions with the Lord about their souls' concerns, but solemn trifling with him.

Never was there a more solemn transaction which men had with God than what was here. Their ears were filled with the noise of the thunder, the lightnings flashed in their eyes, they heard God himself speak, they were most express in covenanting with God; all this time their hearts were not right with him, nor sound in his statutes. In discoursing from this doctrine, we propose,

I. To shew how far a man may go in transacting with, and engaging himself to the Lord, and yet after all he may be but trifling.

II. Shew wherein this trifling and slight work in such a weighty business doth appear.

III. Point out how people come to turn such solemn work into mere trifling.

IV. Apply the subject.

We are, then,

I. To shew how far a man may go in transacting with, and engag-

ing himself to the Lord, and yet after all he may be but trifling. Upon this head we observe,

1. That a person may formally and expressly covenant with God, to be the Lord's, and yet after all be but trifling with God. So did this people, ver. 27, (quoted above). A person may make a covenant with God, both by word and writ, when there is no such heart in him, and the heart goes not along either with tongue or pen. It is an easy thing to say unto the Lord, that he shall be our God, but not easy to say it with the heart. The tongue is not always a faithful interpreter of the heart, especially in these things.—We observe,

2. That a person may make a very full covenant with the Lord, and yet after all be but trifling. What exception was there in this, ver. 27, "All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, we will hear it and do it." How large a promise was this, Matth. viii. 19, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." No doubt, had their hearts kept pace with their words, they had engaged to purpose. Had there been as few secret as there were open reserves, they had dealt honestly.—We observe,

3. That persons may even be morally serious in all this, thinking and resolving in the time to do as they say. It was not a season for gross dissimulation, nor to make a jest of transacting with the Lord anent soul-concerns, when the Lord was speaking out of the darkness and fire to them. Persons in this case are like those who trifle with merchants, in offering to bargain for their wares, out of mere simplicity and ignorance as to the worth of these wares, who, if they had matters set in their due light, would never once propose again so to bid for them. The foolish virgins saw not their lamps out till it was past time.—We observe,

4. That persons may do all this from a sense of their need of a Mediator. Thus did they in the text. What was it that brought this people to this? Why, they had formerly engaged with a whole heart to be the Lord's: Exod. xix. 8, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." But now they fall more solemnly and seriously to work. God sets the mountain on fire for a tribunal of justice; there is a trumpet whose voice waxes louder and louder; by all which God doth, as it were, summon them to compear before him. There are dreadful thunderclaps to carry the sentence of death to their hearts; there are lightnings, by the glancings of which they read the wrath of God against sinners. Yet they must not touch the mountain, lest they be consumed, to teach them how sin had laid the bar as to access to God. This fills them with terror and fear of death, and now they feel

the necessity of a mediator; Exod. xx. 19, "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And yet, after all, "O that there were such an heart in them!"

We are now,

II. To shew wherein this trifling and slight work in such a weighty business does appear.

(1.) It appears in persons engaging themselves to the Lord, without being at pains to prepare themselves, and bring up their hearts to the duty. O what a light thing do most people make of covenanting with God! It is but the saying of a word in prayer; and this is soon said. It is but taking the sacrament; and this is soon done. In the meantime, the heart, like Abraham's ass, is left at the foot of the hill; Gen. xxii. 5, Matt. xv. 8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." They are strangers to God who are strangers to heart-work. They who find no difficulty in bringing their hearts to duties, do not bring them to them at all. The true Christian finds much difficulty in this. "I find," says Paul, "a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." It is but trifling to give the hand to the Lord, while the heart is far from any due concern about the business, and from that solemn seriousness requisite to get it rightly managed. This appears,

(2.) When people engage themselves to the service of the Lord, but do not give their hearts to him. Many engage with the Lord, as a married servant with a master; the master is to get his service, but another has his heart; Jer. xii. 2, "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." The heart may remain glued to lusts, while the soul pretends to be engaging itself to the Lord; and if it were not so, there would not be such a sad account of many who covenant with God. This is but to trifle with God, who requires the heart, or nothing; Prov xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart." Jer. xxx. 21, "For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord." It is an ill-made second marriage, when there is neither the death of, nor a divorce from the first husband. There is no right engaging with the Lord, but where the soul forsakes all others for him, and the heart takes up its eternal rest in Christ. This trifling appears,

(3.) When people have any secret reserves in their closing with Christ, as is the case when the heart is not well content to take Christ with whatsoever may follow this choice: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife,

and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." There is none make right work here, but those who, weighing all things, are content to put a blank in Christ's hand, saying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. They do but trifle who have their right hand sins which they wish not cut off, for they will in this case mar the bargain; and also those who cannot digest that tribulation which is in the way to the kingdom. No cross, no crown. That heart which is not reconciled to the cross, is not such an heart as is required. This trifling appears,

(4.) When people overlook the Mediator in their covenant of peace with God, but transact with God for peace and pardon without respect to the atoning blood of Christ. It is natural to all men to come immediately to God without a Mediator; Exod. xix. 8, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." They are thus for coming without a Mediator, till the terror of God correct their rashness, and they see what a consuming fire God is, and that, if they would be safe, they must come to him under the covert of Christ's wings. If a soul sincerely desires to come to God, the first person to which they must go, is to Christ, the secretary of heaven. For "by him we have access into that grace wherein we stand," Rom. v. 2. And he is "the Mediator of the new covenant," Heb. xii. 24. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. But there are beasts that will touch the mountain, though they be thrust through with a dart. Would you transact with God a covenant of reconciliation? then go to him on the mercy-seat? not the seat of mercy merely for mercy's sake, such a mercy-seat has no being in heaven, but only in the vain imaginations of men on earth; but to the mercy-seat for Christ's sake, where mercy is abundantly distributed with the cordial consent of justice: 2 Cor. v. 19. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is to God as vailed with flesh, that the guilty can only approach; otherwise it is but trifling. For Jesus is "the way, and no man cometh to the Father but by him," John xiv. 6.

(5.) This is turned into solemn trifling with God, by people's not taking Christ for all, but only for making up that of which they may come short; thus endeavouring to patch up a garment of their own righteousness and of his together. Thus many think to please God, by doing what they can to fulfil the law, and looking to Christ to make up that of which they come short. It was forbidden, under the law, to wear a garment of divers sorts of woollen and linen together And they will find themselves befooled, who will adventure their

salvation on this party-coloured garment: Gal. iii. 12, "And the law is not of faith; but the man that doth them shall live in them." A garment pieced up of sundry sorts of righteousness, is not meet for the court of heaven. That heart which would share the glory betwixt Christ and the man himself, is not right with God, and will be left to its own weight.—This trifling appears,

(6.) By persons making a covenant of works with Christ; the tenor thereof is, that if Christ will save their souls, they shall serve him as long as they live. If Christ will give them wages, they will give him work. If he will pay their debt, they shall be his servants, while they have breath in them. And upon this, men may take the sacrament to bind them the faster. And thus, I fear, many make sad work at sacraments and other ordinances. That this is but solemn trifling with God, appears, if ye consider, that this is a covenant which hath no warrant in the word of God, and therefore Christ will never set his seal to it, though we should seal it with our blood. It is quite opposite to the covenant of grace; the design of which is to draw the sinner into the debt of free grace, and to set the crown only on Christ's head, Rom. iv. 14—16, and xi. 6. The covenant of grace, is an everlasting covenant; once in, never out: Isa. lv. 3, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." But this is a tottering covenant, broken every day. This is a servile covenant, to give Christ service for salvation. The other is a filial covenant, where the soul takes Christ and salvation freely offered, and so is a son: "For to as many as believed on him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, John, i. 11. Therefore, they do not serve, that they may get the inheritance; but because the inheritance is theirs, therefore they serve, Gal. iv. 24. and downwards. To take hold of God's covenant, is for a poor empty-handed sinner to come and live freely on Christ; this is to come and buy from him. In order to bring this charge home, I shall mention some evidences of the above practice.—Such as,

(1.) Persons looking upon, and making use of the sacrament only as seals of their vows, and not as seals of God's promises. I do not say but the sacrament is a seal, to seal our engagement to be the Lord's; but this is but the one half, and even the least half as I take it, 1 Cor. x. 16. Why then do people so overlook this, but because, not being shaken out of themselves, they look more to the confirming of their resolutions, than their faith and communion with Christ in his fulness?

(2.) A second evidence is, persons coming to the Lord in this ordinance, rather to engage themselves to duties, than to get strength for the performance of them.

(3.) A third evidence is, persons drawing their peace and comfort rather from their duties, and the performance of that to which they have engaged, than what Christ makes over to sinners in the covenant of grace. It was not so with David, for the covenant itself was all his salvation, and all his desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. But when the other works, he expects his wages; when he fails, he has no hope, as one who has broken covenant with Christ. But, when the true covenanter fails in his duty, yet all that his soul depended upon still remains a covenanted righteousness; all that he trusted to for his duties also remains, to wit, covenanted strength, Rom. vii. 24, 25, and viii. 1. And so there is new application for covenant-benefits; whereas when many fail in their covenant, all is gone, and it must be made over again, ere he can have any new footing. This trifling appears, when,

7. Persons lay hold on Christ with a faith of which the mighty power of God was not at the forming, Eph. i. 19; but is merely the product of a person's natural faculties. Most men's faith is like wild oats, that grow up without the labour of the husbandman. They come too easily to it to make any sure work by it. The evil heart of unbelief is not so easily shaken off as men imagine. Those who find no difficulty, do but trifle and beat the air; if the work were heartily plied, it would not be so easy. We now proceed,

III. To inquire how people come to turn such solemn work into trifling. They do so,

1. Because they have no due consideration of the worth and preciousness of their souls, they do not suitably value the great salvation; Matth. xxii. 5, "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." Men will not trifle in matters which appear to them of great concern. But men who do not duly value their souls will venture them on they know not what. But who considers eternity, and the weight which lies on the soul's transacting with God? If men had eternity in their eye, and were transacting as for eternity, communicating for eternity, they would act in another manner, and not thus trifle in so important a business. They do so,

2. Because they know not what a God they have to do with, they think that he is altogether such a one as themselves, Psalm l. 21. Men transact in their duties with they know not whom, and therefore they know not what; Joshua xxiv. 19, "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins." When people have mean thoughts of God, they are ready to think any little thing may serve him. They thus trifle,

3. Because they know not their own hearts, and their deceits; Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? There are many secret biases there, to which they do not advert. Men may be hypocrites, and not know themselves to be such. The heart has a depth of deceit, which is not easy to fathom, which will make men say, with Saul, I have performed the commandment of the Lord, while, after all, the bleating of the sheep will discover the deceit. They thus trifle,

4. Because sin has never been made bitter enough to them. It is hard to wean us from the love of lusts, if the breasts of them be not laid over with gall and wormwood. We must dig deep, and build upon the rock. Where the fallow ground is not plowed up, there will be a sowing among thorns, Jer. iv. 3. The consent of many to take Christ, such as it is, is too lightly win to be solid.—They thus trifle,

5. Because they are hasty and indeliberate in their engaging. They fall a-building ere they count the cost, Matth. xiv. 25.; what is rashly done, is but slightly done in this matter. He that would make sure work, must lay his account beforehand with what he may meet with in the Lord's way. Then, meet with what they will, they will not be offended.—They thus trifle,

6. Because they have never got a sufficient discovery of their own utter weakness and insufficiency. They think they have a stock, and therefore may trade with it, and are very ready to undertake, though their heart will certainly misgive in the performance. This is building on the old foundation of nature; whereas, there will never be sure work, till this foundation be razed. If any man will come after Jesus, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow him. It only remains that,

IV. We make some application. This doctrine may help us to see the reason why so many return with the dog to his vomit. There is an error in the first concoction. That you may beware of this, we would exhort you, to make sure work in your transacting with the Lord. O do not trifle in so important a concern! To guard you effectually against this, consider the following things.

Consider, this is to put, so far as you can, a solemn cheat on the great God: Gal. vi. 7, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is a dangerous thing to mock God. His all-seeing eye knows how you deal with him, and can penetrate through all your pretences. Consider.

2. It is to put a solemn cheat on your own souls; you thus deceive your own souls. If you trifle with God, you will find at length a sad disappointment; Isa. .l 11, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that

compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." As ye sow, ye will reap. Sow the wind of hypocrisy, and you will reap the whirlwind of wrath.

3. Consider the weight of the matter; the salvation or damnation of the soul is no small business; if you manage it right, you may get your salvation sealed; if not, see Luke xiv. 24, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper."

4. Consider, if you thus trifle with God in this matter, you will be discovered. The man without the wedding-garment was soon found out. You will not hold right to the end; you will return to the vomit; your latter end will be worse than your beginning. Consider,

5. That you have a deceitful heart; it is necessary to be sure with it; it will soon give you the slip, and break the bonds, if they be slightly put on. Consider,

*Lastly*, If you make sure work, you will find the eternal advantage of it. All the blessings of the covenant will be your portion. You may get a feast; "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word."

I shall close with the following short Directions:—

Set about the work of self-examination. Inquire particularly at your hearts, whether they be willing to take Christ, and renounce all other lovers, and to take him wholly, only, and everlastingly. Pray that God may examine you, and discover yourselves to yourselves; lay yourselves open to self-searching. *Lastly*, Put your hearts into the Lord's hand, as sensible that in yours they will miscarry. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

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THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

## SERMON V.

Deut. v. 29,

*O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.*

You have been this day avouching the Lord to be your God. You have all had an offer of Christ, and there was none heard tell of

protesting against him; nay, did not your hearts say within you, Even so I take him? Many of you have, before angels and men, sealed a covenant with him this day, and we may report to the Lord, that you have said you are content to be his. O that there were such an heart in you, all would be well!

Having, in the preceding discourse, offered all that we intend from the first doctrine, we now proceed to

Doctrine II. That a heart sincerely and suitably corresponding with the profession of a covenanting people, is a most valuable and excellent thing.

Here I shall,

I. Shew what a heart such a heart is.

II. Make it appear, that such a heart is a most valuable thing.

I. We are to shew what a heart such a heart is; and on this head, the particulars shall be mostly taken out of the context. We observe,

1. That such an heart is a heart that has got a view of the majesty and glorious perfections of that God with whom we have to do: Deut. v. 24, "And he said, Behold the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." The eye saw this; all would have been right, if the glory of the Lord had thus shined in their hearts. An unenlightened heart in the knowledge of the Lord looks so like hell, and unlike heaven, that it cannot be such a heart. A dark heart will make a dark confused conversation. There is no right worshipping of an unknown God. This view of the Lord's glory is necessary. Moses desired it, Exod. xxxiii.; and all get it in a greater or less degree: 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If ye have seen the King in his glory, and his train filling the temple, it is a token of good. But, alas! many see the chair of state, who behold not the King sitting in it.

2. It is a heart filled with the fear of God. "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me." Indeed they professed it, and they had a tolerably sufficient measure of it, had it been but of the right stamp, and had it got leave to have soaked kindly into their hearts. But, alas! it was only like a scud of rain, violent in the time, but wetting only the surface of the ground, and soon dried up. But O for such a heart as would fear always! not with a slavish distrustful fear, but a filial reverential fear, a fear of circumspection. Such a heart as would keep the eye upon the majesty of

the Lord, would promise to keep right: Heb. xii. 28, "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." A heart wanting this, will be like an unruly horse without a bridle; Prov. xxv. 28, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

3. It is a humble heart. O how humble did they seem to be now under the sense of their own sinfulness, and the holiness of that God with whom they had to do! A heart humbled indeed is a valuable blessing. When Christ lances the swelling of the heart, and lets out the filthy stuff of pride and self-conceit, makes the man low in his own eyes, he is even preparing a house for himself on earth; for the Lord "dwells with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. They durst not go near the mountain to touch it, they looked as they would rather have rolled themselves among the dust of the Lord's feet. "O that there were such an heart in them!" The honest heart is shaken out of self-confidence, for a right sight of the Lord in his glory, and of our own vileness, go always together; Isa. vi. 5, "Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

4. It is a heart filled with wonder at the goodness of God, his condescension and patience towards sinners, vers. 24 and 26. That soul will wonder that God should ever have come in speaking-terms with vile man; that ever anything should have proceeded out of his mouth, but arrows dipped in the vinegar of the curse, to have slain the traitors outright. And will God thus indeed deal with man? It will be the wonder of that soul, that God hath not consumed it, mingled its blood with its sacrifices, struck it dead at the communion-table. O how wonderful that they should have spoke with the Lord, and are yet alive!

.5 It is a heart convinced of the need of a Mediator, and resolved to employ him in all causes betwixt God and them, ver. 27. It is not every one that sees their need of Christ, and their need of an Advocate to go betwixt God and them. But he who has such a heart will look on himself, in himself, as dry stubble, as he looks on God as a consuming fire; and all his own duties and attainments as a wall of dry boards which will not keep the fire from him, but increase it, and desire to have Christ betwixt them and a holy God, as a crystal wall, which may let through the light, but not the flames of that fire. His very name will be precious to that heart,

for it is "as ointment poured forth," Song i. 3. How sweet is the name of a Redeemer to a captive, and to a humbled sinner, one who may lay his hands on both!

6. It is a heart taking the Lord only for their God. They professed they would have no more to do with idols, though it was not long ere their hearts turned to their old bias: Exod. xxxii. 8, "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them, they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." But such a heart renounces all other lovers, gives Christ's rivals their leave, and halts no more betwixt two opinions. If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all, that is, part with all but Christ. When a man gets such a heart, there is an extraordinary uproar made in the soul; when it enters the man's breast, Satan cries as these, "They that turn the world up-side down, are come hither also." There is a strange overturning of thrones there. As when Christ and the gospel came into the world, the world, which before was wholly given to idolatry, then made great reformation; oracles were struck dumb, idols were cast to the moles and to the bats; so when the man gets such a heart, down goes the clay-god, the world, and Christ mounts the throne; neither back nor belly must be gods longer to the man, king self loses his crown, which is put upon the head of Christ, and free grace. The heart, which was divided among many lusts before, enters now on Jesus, the beauty of the Upper house.

7. It is a heart for the Lord's work, ver. 27. It is a heart which inclines the man who has taken Christ's enlisting money to fight his battles; which willingly stoops to the yoke of Christ's commandments, and is set to walk in the way of obedience. It is a heart reconciled to the law of God; the soul being married to Christ, may not be barren, but must bring forth fruit unto God. When the Lord charges the heart, the bullock is tamed, and accustomed to the yoke. To be more particular here, we observe,

(1.) That it is a heart for universal obedience, ver. 27. It wishes to neglect none of God's commands, but to have respect to them all, Psalm cxix. 6. When the heart is straight, it makes the conversation uniform. The Lord's stamp on every duty recommends it to the care of such a heart. The heart naturally is like some servants who promise to do all at the bargain-making, but fail in the accomplishment, like the sluggard who will not plow because of the cold. But such a heart puts a blank in the Lord's hand, and makes no exceptions. Some sins lie nearer the heart than others, some a right eye, some but a left toe. The right eye must be plucked out;

thou must put to thine own hand to this hard work, it must be with thine own consent. Amen, says such a heart; let bosom-lusts yield to Christ.

(2.) It is a heart for constant obedience. They limit no time. Compare the text with John viii. 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." We have a sad account of Rehoboam, 2 Chron. xii. 1, "When he was established in the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him." He was like many men, who make use of religion like a net, who, when they have catched their prey, fold up and lay by their net. But see the fountain of his apostacy, ver. 14, "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord;" prepared or fixed, or established *not* his heart. But such an heart is for following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, in foul and fair weather, and will abide with Christ in a storm when the summer vermin is not to be seen: Psalm xix. 9, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever." Trees planted in God's vineyard, watered by his grace, having such a heart, are not like common trees, green only one while of the year, but those are ever green, and are yielding their fruit in their season, Psalm vii. 3. Such an heart takes with the stock, and so lives by its sap.

(3.) It is a heart resolute in obedience. We will do it, say they, stand in the way what will. See the portraiture of such a heart, Micah iv. 5, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." Such a heart had Caleb and Joshua, they followed the Lord fully. It made them row against the stream. It gives the man courage for the arduous enterprise. Heaven is sweet in the eyes of all; why then do so many go to hell? why, they have not such a heart. There are difficulties in the way to heaven, they have no courage to grapple with these. They see heaven afar, but there is a great gulph betwixt them and it, and they have not such a resolute heart as to venture on it, and heaven will not drop into their mouths.

(4.) It is a heart that is content to know what is duty and what is sin: "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." And indeed that is a very rare heart; for most people are glad to lodge lust; as some lodged intercommuned people, they are willing they should get house-room, but are desirous that they themselves should not see them, so as to know that they are there. But such a heart loves to know the whole counsel of God: John iii. 20, "But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that

they are wrought in God." It is a nonsuch heart, which is content to have all anatomized and searched out; which in every case is ready to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" which is content to sit down at Christ's feet and learn all; while others lodge their lusts under disguise, and loathe the discovery of them, rebel against the light, and shut their eyes, till God judicially blind them, so as that they at last come to believe lies.

(5.) It is a heart to which God's bare will is a sufficient reason both for faith and practice. Such a heart receives the speaker for the word's sake, and not the word for his, but for God's sake. Such a heart receives the kingdom as a little child, who has authority enough if father or mother say it. Such a heart had Abraham; he gets a strange commandment, for which he could see no reason but the will of God, Gen. xxii. Father and son must part, not to see other more in this world, though the son of the promise. The Father himself must do the deed. Here were many deaths both to the father and to the son; but God's will was revealed, and they were about fully to obey; then says the Lord, ver. 12, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God;" that thou hast such a heart. We go on to observe,

8. It is a heart that has high and honourable thoughts of God, ver. 24, "Behold the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." His greatness; "O that there were such a heart in them!" They professed this. High and honourable thoughts of the husband is necessary to the comfort of the married state, and to the performance of duties. The queen stands upon the right hand, Psalm xlv. 9. Mean thoughts of God are the neck-break of right obedience to him. They think him such an one as themselves, Psalm l. 31. Hence mean, pitiful services are thought sufficient. They forget that he "will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people will he be glorified, Lev. x. 3. Such a heart is let into the view of his greatness in some measure, so that its conclusions will be, Psalm xcv. 3, "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods." So that the soul's familiarity with God will yet be managed with a due regard to the awful greatness and infinite distance betwixt God and the creature. And this may serve as a help to distinguish true communion with God from delusions, Hebrews xii. 28, 29. John xx. 28.

It is a heart which the voice of God has reached, ver. 24, (quoted above.) O that this voice had had as much access to their hearts as

to their ears! Paul spoke, and God spoke, and Lydia's heart was opened. "My sheep," said Jesus, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John x. 27. To honest covenanters there is something more in preaching than a bare sound, something more in sacraments than bread and wine: these are but the vehicles of the Lord's voice to the soul, and the ordinances are empty things when there is no divine fire infolded in them. There is a voice of the Lord in our mother's house; in the public ordinances there is a good report of Christ. Sinners are invited, obtested, commanded to hear and believe. But Christ comes into the inner chamber of the elect's hearts, and there he gives his voice, which is a majestic voice, a heart-melting sound; Jer. xxiii. 29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It thaws the frozen affections. A quickening voice that puts activity in the soul; it puts the spirit in motion, so as that it rests not till it has taken up its rest in God; John vi. 63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

10. It is a heart which takes up with the Lord for its God, even when he appears in the glorious robes of his perfect holiness. This they professed; but "O that there were such a heart in them!" The truth is, the carnal mind is enmity against God; and none but saints indeed can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, Psalm xxx. 4. God is glorious in his holiness indeed; but none will love him for that glory, but such as are partakers of his divine nature. Those who love him for this, love him for himself. And indeed such a heart, being a holy heart, will cleave to the fountain of holiness, to the end that they may be transformed into the same image. To take God in the robes of mercy, is not strange; but God's holiness chaseth unholy hearts away from him.

11. It is a heart sensible of that vast distance which sin has made betwixt God and the soul, which has got such a sight of his own sinfulness, and God's holiness, that it sees there is no transacting with God but by a Mediator, ver. 27. Such a heart will say as Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." Such will not offer to come into the presence of God but as introduced by the King's Son, nor will desire to look on God but as vailed with flesh, knowing that a sight of unvailed majesty is enough to confound a sinner. And truly, till the Lord touch the heart, it will not be such a heart, but, like a fearless beast, will touch the fiery mountain. Such a heart will highly prize Christ, and come to the Lord under the vail of Christ's flesh, and will have no boldness of access but what flows from the blood of Christ, Heb. x. 19, 20.

12. It is a heart reconciled to the whole law of God, ver. 27. It is not every heart which is such. They only have it, "who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit," Rom. viii. 1. Hypocrites' hearts are never reconciled to the whole law of God. They cannot say they are not ashamed in having respect to all God's commandments, Psalm cxix. 6. There are always some parts of the Bible, which hypocrites would spend their blood on to blot them out, if that would do. Here, there is a raging lust says, yea; there, there is a holy law says, nay; the heart cannot be reconciled to both at once. Both may be in the experience both of the sincere Christian and the hypocrite. What is the difference? why, the hypocrite would fain have the law bow to his lusts, the sincere soul would have his lusts bow to the law. For he "delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man," Rom. vii. 22. And his heart will approve the law, when it forbids, accuses, and condemns his corruptions, ver. 16, "If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law, that it is good."

13. It is a heart which is for taking the law only out of Christ's hand as Mediator, ver 27. The Mediator first makes the peace between God and the sinner, then bids the man work. But the law of itself first bids sinners work, and tells them they shall have their peace according to their work; which would be dreadful news to such a heart. Under the law to Christ, 1 Cor. ix. 21. The law, cast into a gospel-mould, is the only law such a heart desires to meddle with, that, "being married to Christ, they may bring forth fruit to God," Rom. vii. 4.; that being by Christ made partakers of the adoption, they may serve as sons, not as hired servants or slaves.

*Lastly*, It is a heart ready for obedience, ver. 27. The soul then stands at Mount Zion, and says, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." They have had Christ's banner in the banqueting-house, as being ready to rise up and fight his battles, under the conduct and influence of their glorious leader. Such a heart has eaten the passover with its loins girt, and with a staff in its hand, ready for the journey. The heart that is for obedience, but not yet, is not such a heart; it is but a shifting heart, which will end in a refusal. It is but a civil way of putting off for altogether; Psalm cxix. 5, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

We now proceed,

II. To shew that such a heart is a most valuable thing.—It must be so; For,

1. Such a heart is God's delight; "O that there were such an heart in them!" This would give content to the heart of Christ.

This is his rest. The very prayer of the upright is his delight; Psalm xi. 7, "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." Such a heart is pleasing to God; and it cannot be otherwise, for it is shapen out according to his mind. The person who has such a heart is another David, a man according to God's own heart. It is a heart which, as believing, pleaseth God; a heart well pleased with him, in which God is well pleased.

2. It is that heart without which the largest profession, and the most express covenanting with God, is little worth. Without this heart men do but as the Lord's enemies, they lie unto him. And it is a dangerous thing to lie unto the Lord, like Ananias and Sapphira, who died with a lie in their mouth. They take God's name in vain. The voice indeed is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's. It is but mocking God, and juggling with the Holy One. It is but doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, and offering the blind and the lame for sacrifice, which will bring down a curse instead of a blessing. Let a man be at never so much pains in duties, yet still the one thing is lacking while they have not such a heart.

3. The want of this heart is very grievous to the spirit of Christ. The Lord doth thus, in the text, lament their want of it. If anything pierce the heart of God, it is when, with a covenanting people, there is wanting such a heart. What can be more grievous in a married lot than when the husband has not the wife's heart? Ezek. vi. 9, "I am broken, says God, with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a-whoring after their idols." There can be no contentment in that condition, as Haman said, "Yet all this availeth me nothing," Esth. v. 13. And a soul's grieving the Lord's Spirit, is a forerunner of the Lord's grieving them; Psalm xvi. 4, "Their sorrow shall be multiplied that hastens after another god."

4. God accepts of the duty, and is well pleased with the bargain, where there is such a heart; "O that there were such an heart in them!" There wants no more to complete the bargain betwixt them and me. Then, as they call me their God, so would I call them mypeople by a saving relation. But where such is not, the contract betwixt Christ and the soul is written indeed, but it is not signed. Would you know, then, if Christ be yours, with all the benefits of the everlasting covenant; why, if you have such a heart, you have Christ's heart, you are married to the Lord, and shall never be put away. A voice of the word without, and an echo to it of the heart within, closes the bargain; Psalm xxvii. 8, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." See also Jer. iii. 22.

5. Where there is such a heart God will be well pleased with the person, and accept the duty, though it have many defects; albeit he be not pleased with these defects, yet in mercy he will overlook them; "O that there were such an heart in them!" As if he had said, O if they were but honest in the main, I would not be severe on them for every escape. The Lord will use the indulgence of a father for such infirmities; Song v. 1, "I have drunk my wine with my milk." *Milk*, that is, he accepts the meanest work where there is such an heart. A groan, a tear, a breathing after the Lord, is accepted; as the father loves more the lisping child's expression of its affection to him, than all the towering compliments of a flattering tongue, 2 Chron. xv. 17; the eye of their faith, though, like a bleared eye, Song iv. 9; the fire of their love, though weak, ver. 10; the hand of their confidence, though a trembling hand; the anchor of their hope, though feeble, Psalm xlvii. 11; their feet of obedience, though lame, like Mephibosheth, yet shall they be set at the king's table; though their very sincerity be not without a mixture of hypocrisy, Gal. ii. 13, yet it holds weight in the balance; Christ takes their petitions, though not every way well drawn, blots out some, fills up other things in them, and gets them answered. Their will is accepted for the deed; their grief for want of will, for the will itself; all this where there is such a heart.

6. They will never prove stedfast in the Lord's covenant without such a heart; "O that there were such an heart in them!" They have spoke fair, but they will never keep a word they say, for they have not such a heart; Psalm lxxviii. 37, "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." The heart is the principle of actions; such a heart is the principle of perseverance; and there can be no stedfastness without a principle; Matth. xiii. 6, "And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root they withered away." The tree which is set in the ground but does not take root in it, will be easily blown over. The house without a foundation cannot withstand the storm, Matth. vi. 23. They who have covenanted with God without such a heart, will make foul work, it will appear that the devil has gone down with the sop, their former lusts will be swallowed over again, 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. Their last state will be worse than the first. Their vows will be no stronger than Samson's withs; their resolutions, like the walls of Jericho, will fall down at the sound of the horn of temptation.

7. Such an heart will fence the man against apostacy; "O that there were such an heart in them!" They would not then turn away from me; they would keep by their covenant: Luke vii. 15, "But

that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Cleaving to Christ with constancy, without apostacy, is the very essence of such a heart. Gold is not gold but dross, if it do not continue in the fire. Men's hearts may get some light strokes of the Spirit, some fleeting motions of the same, and the heart still unsound as the stony ground. But the Spirit of God and of glory rest not on the heart, it is not such an heart: 2 John, ii. 27. "But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you;" the fire of true love will be preserved, though it flame not, whatever cools there may be taking place. Such an heart has learned so much of the grace of God as to deny worldly lusts, and all forsaken lovers, when they come to court the soul. Where such a heart is, there is the root of the matter in the man, Job, xix. 28.; and there is sap enough to keep in the life of it, Prov. xii. 3. "The root of the righteous shall not be moved. Yea, the Root of Jesse has engaged that this root shall not fail," John iv. 14. They are kept through the power of God. God is careful of the leaves of Christianity, Psalm i. 3. much more of real Christians themselves; therefore says Job chap. xvii. 9, "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Be their light never so weak, it will last, yea it will grow, and shine more and more unto the perfect day. It is the abiding seed of God.

*Lastly*, Such a heart enriches the man who has it; "O that there were such an heart in them!" they want no more to make them happy here and hereafter. Grace and glory, and all good, is the portion of those who have such an heart. Such an heart has taken Christ, is married and knit to him, and then Christ is yours, all is yours; pardon, peace, and every blessing; as he who gets a hold of the main link of a chain, draws all after him; "There the Lord commands the blessing, even life which never ends."

We shall conclude this discourse with beseeching you to be in earnest that you have such a heart. This is that which you all need, that without which you must be miserable for ever.—It is a most invaluable blessing, what you should highly prize; what is precious in God's esteem, and what he is urgent with you that you may possess: "O that there were such an heart in them!"

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

## SERMON VI.

DEUT. v. 29,

*O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever.*

HAVING considered, in the two preceding discourses, the first and second doctrines proposed from this subject, we now go on to

DOCTRINE III. and *last*, That the work of covenanting with the Lord is slight work, when it is not heart-work; or, That solemn covenanting with the Lord is but solemn trifling with him, when the work of covenanting is not heart-work.

In treating this point, we shall,

I. Produce some evidences, that solemn covenanting is often nothing but solemn trifling, and not heart-work.

II. Shew when solemn covenanting is not heart-work.

III. Shew how people come to make solemn covenanting but a trifling business.

IV. Shew the danger of trifling, and not making heart-work of this weighty business. And then,

V. Apply the whole.

We are,

I. To produce some evidences, that solemn covenanting is often nothing but solemn trifling, and not heart-work. It is of importance that you may be stirred up to take heed to the deceits which we may discover in this weighty business. With this view, we observe,

1. That apostacy and defection from the good ways of the Lord, persons returning again openly to the same courses which they pursued before. This is an evidence, 2 Peter ii. 19—22; Matth. xii. 45, "Then the evil spirit goeth, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." They who have no root soon wither away, Matth. xiii. 6. There are many who, since the revolution, have solemnly covenanted with the Lord at sacraments, and many who have done it, when they durst not so well avow it as now, who have given a sad account of themselves since that time,

having returned to their former courses of wickedness and profanity. Fallen stars were stars never but in appearance. To lose both life and leaf is a dreadful symptom; John xv. 6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Another evidence is,

2. When some lusts are maintained in Christ's room, as when an adulterous woman takes another man instead of her husband. There are some lusts from which the heart is never loosed, right eyes they cannot part with; this is secret apostacy from the Lord: Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." When the Lord offers himself to sinners, he says, if you will take me, let these go their way. Some enter into a marriage-covenant with the Lord, but they give their hearts to other lovers, Psalm xiv. 4, (quoted before). This is hypocritical dealing with God, which is a disease in the vitals of religion, Psalm lxxviii. 37, (quoted above). Another evidence is,

3. Persons making their covenant with the Lord, a cover to their sloth, and a pander to their lusts. It is sad work which persons make of covenanting, when it serves only to conjure their consciences, who hence can sleep more securely in their sins. Many are never more light, vain, and frothy, than after such a work; a most shrewd sign of a whorish disposition: Prov. vii. 14, "I have peace-offerings with me. This day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face." The covenant of God is a covenant of peace and war, which inclines the sinner to be at peace with the Lord's friends, and at war with his enemies. It makes the soul to say to former lusts, I have learned from the gospel, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Tit. ii. 12. Hence, Christ no sooner enters the heart, but he comes as Captain of the Lord's host; and the person's heart thus becomes the seat of war: Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other." And these lusts which were formerly gold chains, are now turned into heavy iron fetters: Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—Another evidence is,

4. The barrenness of the lives of professors, nothing of the fruits of holiness appearing in their lives. We are, Rachel-like, barren, having no more but the leaves of a profession, the performance of external duties, to give us the name of Christians. Alas! fire from

heaven seems to have blasted many of us, and the curse of the Lord is as a worm at our root. Married to the Lord, and yet barren, is a contradiction, Rom. vii. 4. For the very end of this marriage is, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. Where the soul is joined to the Lord, it is made the habitation of the Spirit: and this is that which produces the fruits of holiness, Eph. v. 9, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

Here some may say, Alas! this speaks death to me, for do what I will, the weeds in the cursed soil of my heart suffers no fruit to appear there. To such I answer.—There is no fruit which grows in the heart of a believer in the world, but it has a weed of corruption by the side of it; their faith is marked with unbelief, their hope with diffidence, their very sincerity with hypocrisy. But are you at pains to pluck up these? If you should look into a garden, and saw nothing but weeds in it, yet if ye saw the gardener weeding it, you would conclude there must be something else there; so in this case. Will you see if there be any thriving of undergrowth in your hearts, if you be growing downwards in humility, self-loathing, self-denial, depending and cleaving more from a sense of need to the Lord? Eph. iv. 15, 16. Barren trees use not to have their branches hanging down to salute the ground, unless they be broken off by a violent wind.—Another evidence is,

5. The having no communication of the life of grace from Christ to the soul: John xiv. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Food and raiment are what every soul married to the Lord get from him. If the soul be truly united to Christ, it will partake of the root and sap of the vine: John vi. 57, "He that eateth me, saith Jesus, even he shall live by me." True faith opens a way for a stream of blood to run through the heart, by which the soul is purged and quickened. The blood of Jesus "purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. But, alas! the faith of many is like a pipe laid short of the fountain, and so brings none of the water of life into the soul. Many covenant with the Lord as the seven women, Isa. iv. 1, who take hold of one man, as it is there said, they will be called by his name; for so is Christ's spouse, in token of her marriage-relation, she loseth her name, and takes her husband's, Isa. xliv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." This will take away their reproach before the world, and it will do much to silence the blustering tongue of an ill-natured conscience. Yea, but after all this, they will eat their own bread, Isa. iv. 1. They will live upon their own stock of natural and acquired abilities, for they are not, as in Matth. iii. 5, "poor in spirit." They come not, as true believers, with a

weak soul to a strong God, an empty vessel to a full fountain. Thus does the true believer, who says, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." But the other will live on their lusts; Christ gives rest to their consciences, and their lusts give rest to their hearts; he shall bear up their hopes, and their lusts shall satisfy their desires.—They will wear their own apparel. Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Their duties make a great figure in their own eyes, and therefore are cyphers in God's account. Hence the more they do and the better they do, the more they are in conceit with themselves, and the further from Christ. It is quite contrary with true covenanters; Phil. iii. 3, "They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:" Rev. ii. 14, "They wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb."—We shall only add as an evidence,

*Lastly*, The having no contentment in Christ alone. Where the soul heartily closes with Christ, he is to the soul a covering to the eyes: Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Hence the triumph of faith, even when all external things fail; Hab. iii. 17, "I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." But, alas! how many of us have no comfort, but when the cisterns of creature-comforts are running full! how few arrive at the height of rejoicing in the Lord, when these cisterns are dried up! Matth. xiii. 45, 46. Every person's house stands upon two props, Christ and the creature, but the weight lies only upon one of them. Take away the world from the believer, he stands firm on the rock Christ; take away the world from the hypocrite, and all falls down together. A person may bear to have some branch of his comforts cut off; but when God strikes at the root of creature-comforts, then may the hypocrite say, Thou hast taken away my gods, and what have I more? Some can endure any thing but poverty, for covetousness reigns in them; others any thing but disrespect, for pride is their idol.

Here again some may say, If this be an evidence, we know not who will make sure work, for many time gracious persons are as much, if not more, cast down with the loss of creature-comforts, than others; To this I answer, No doubt gracious souls will sometimes be more joyful on the receipt of a temporal mercy, and more cast down on the loss of them, than others: for the chief thing

which affects him is the face of God appearing in it, either as favourable or frowning; so that they will be ready to say on such an occasion, as in Gen. xxxiii. 10, "For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me." And this will make a mole-hill mercy or cross appear like a mountain. The godly in this case fetch their comfort from the Lord, others fetch theirs from something else in the world; when one stream runs dry, they go to another, like the prodigal before he came home. The drying up of the streams sends the gracious soul to the fountain.

We now proceed,

II. To shew when covenanting is not heart-work, but a trifling business.—It is so,

1. When the soul is not divorced from sin. The heart is naturally glewed to sin, and it is impossible that the heart can at once be both for the Lord and lusts, Matth. vi. 24. The first marriage must be made void before a second can be made sure. They must have their covenant with their lusts broken, who will have their covenant with the Lord sure; Hos. xiv. 8, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Living lusts and the living Lord will not both get the throne of the heart. In the day of espousals, when Christ gets the crown, lusts get the cross. Many will be in suit of the heart, and the heart for a time may be halting betwixt two; but in a covenanting day with the Lord, all others must be discharged; Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter! and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." Here some may inquire, How may a person know if their heart be divorced from sin? Answ. That which makes the man and his lusts one, is the greedy grip which the heart takes of sin, it is the heart cleaving to its lusts: Jer. viii. 5, "Why then is the people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." The heart and affections in sin are like the hot iron, where the iron and the fire are very close together. The man's lusts are to him like a leg or an arm which is knit to the body with joints and bands. Now, where the heart is divorced, it loaths that sin which before it loved. Though sin cleaves to the man, yet he cleaves not to it, Rom. vii. 17—22. Never was the captive more desirous to be loosed of his bands, than that soul to be free from sin. Like a weak honest virgin, though it cannot shake itself loose of its grips, yet it would be content if one would set it free. Solemn covenanting is trifling,

2. When the soul is not divorced from the law, Rom. viii. 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the

body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God." Legal professors do but trifle with the Lord, and never make heart-work of covenanting with him. They may bind themselves faster and faster to duties, but there is no engaging their heart to the Lord of duties; they are as they who would draw up with the hand-maid instead of the mistress; and do but bind themselves to the work of spinning out their own ruin out of their own bowels. There is a generation who get some convictions of their misery by sin, the law comes and takes them by the throat, and then they cry, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Hence they bestir themselves, and fall a trading to gain something for heaven and eternal life; they set about secret duties, attending public ordinances, and take the sacrament, and the effect of all is but to wreath their necks faster in the yoke of law-bondage, and to remove themselves farther from Christ. This is but trifling.—If it be inquired, How may one know if they be divorced from the law? you have the word, Gal. ii. 19, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The law comes home to the soul with such force and power, that it cuts off all hopes of the soul's ever mending itself by its works; makes the soul see its utter emptiness and weakness; and hence it dies off, and lies at the foot of free grace, with that prayer in its mouth, Jer. xxxi. 18, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Then Christ's blood is the soul's only refuge for guilt, Christ's Spirit for holiness; and the soul will have no peace but what comes from this blood; while many instead of this, lick themselves whole of their wounds by confession, mourning, prayer for pardon, and engaging not to do so any more. But it is quite different from this, when, as above, the Spirit of Christ leads his divorced bride out of the house of her former husband to Jesus himself.—It is so,

3. When the soul comes not heartily and freely to the Lord in his covenant, Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. The Lord will not meet that soul. He cares not for persons giving the hand, when they do not give him their hearts. Indeed this is a covenant which speaks out the extreme naughtiness of men's hearts, by their coming into it grudgingly and per force. The sacrifice that is dragged to the altar, will not be accepted, it will run away from it again. It will be like the strong bough which is forcibly bowed, which will soon fly back. When the Lord comes to a soul, he deals with the heart. He touches the heart, as he touched the hearts of Saul's companions, 1 Sam. x. 26; Jer. xxxi. 3, "The Lord hath appeared to me of old,

saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." There is grace in the Lord's lips, heavenly rhetoric to catch a sinner's affections, Psalm xlv. 2. When the Spirit of the Lord pours in overcoming grace, then the man pours out his heart before him, Psalm lxii. 8. Thus the people become willing in the day of his power, Psalm cx. 3. Here we may shortly state and consider two cases:—

Case 1. What shall become of those, then, who are driven to the Lord by terror? I answer, Those who are only driven by terror, they will even leave him again when the terror is over, for terrors will break a heart of stone, but will not melt it. At the same time, terror may begin the work, which love will crown: Hos. ii. 14, "Therefore, behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." When the Lord is to match with sinners, they are bold and perverse, they will not speak to him, till he has shot an arrow into their flesh, till he has made them prisoners of war; and then, when he has them in chains, he makes love to them. He first drives the sinner, and then he draws him like Noah's dove into the ark, Gen. viii. 9. The Lord sets the avenger of blood in pursuit of the poor criminal, he with a heavy heart leaves his own city, and his old acquaintances, and flees for his bare life to the city of refuge, to which he has no inclination, but *must do* is a great thing. When he comes to the gates, and sees the beauty of the place, the excellencies and loveliness of the city charm him; then he says, This is my rest, here will I dwell.

Case 2. I often find, when I am to go to the Lord's table, a great backwardness to the duty. What should be done in this case? I answer, There is a great difference betwixt a man's turning his back and running away from his friend, and a sickly man's coming slowly to him. And if I might be allowed so to speak, I should distinguish between a backward heart, and a backwardness upon the heart; Matth. xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." A backward heart is a foolish heart, and will make sad work of a communion; Prov. xvii. 16, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" I wish the Lord may turn this people from the Lord's table, till he has turned their hearts back to himself; or else, when they have put their hands to the plough, they will after all leave it, and injure religion more than if they had never meddled with it. But for others, our Master allows you to come as you are able, with your burden upon your back, and lay it down at his feet; Matth. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give

you rest. Psalm. lxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." The great Physician knows very well his patient comes with heart and good will, though his sickness and indisposition makes him come with a slow pace. It is trifling,

4. When the soul comes to the Lord in his covenant for peace to their consciences, but not for victory over their lusts. Many come to the Lord, as a sick man to the physician, to cure him of his wounds, but not to live upon his charges; Psalm lxxviii. 34, "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God." They have use for the blood, not for the water, which came from the side of Jesus. This is but half-work, not heart-work. Enemies to the spirit of holiness are enemies to Christ. I never think it the best frame for a communion table when people sit down at the Lord's table chiefly for peace and comfort. A view of the King, a transforming sight which might strengthen the soul, to have this before our eyes sitting down at the feast, would certainly be most safe. To get a touch of the hem of Christ's garment, for stopping the issue of sin, will be salutary indeed. It is so,

5. When the soul accepts of conditional promises, but does not accept of and receive the Lord himself in absolute promises. This is to agree upon the less points of the covenant, and to neglect the main point, Heb. viii. 10. The great thing God offers in the gospel is Christ. He is a foolish man that would claim the benefit of the contract, while he neglects to marry the woman. It is a dreadful thing to turn the covenant of grace into a mere servile or mere social covenant, as passes betwixt neighbouring independent states. It is most properly a marriage-covenant, where the soul first takes the Lord himself, and then looks for the benefits accruing to it by the happy match. Natural men fancy a very easy covenant in,—"He that confesseth his sins, shall find mercy.—Call on me, and I will answer thee.—What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—He will accept the will for the deed; not considering that all the promises are yea and amen in Christ; and suppose they could perform the condition of these promises, yet they could not have benefit by them while they have not the Lord Christ, dwelling, living, and reigning in them.—It is solemn trifling,

*Lastly*, When there is not an absolute resignation of the will to the will of the Lord. This is to have reserves in our covenanting with the Lord. Man's will is the great rebel against the Lord, and must, if we make sure work, be bound hand and foot in a covenanting day. There must be a double resignation, (1.) To the precep-

tive will: Rom. vi. 17, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you." The soul must no more snarl with duty, but be content to take on the yoke of Christ's commands. And they who are not content to stand and receive the same commands from mount Zion, which were thundered into their hearts from mount Sinai before, their hearts are not for this work. (2.) There must be resignation to the providential will of God. It has been long a question between the Lord and you, who shall be master of your process, who shall carve out your lot? Are you come to a point now? even to that point? Psalm xlvii. 4. "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." It is well, you are wise; for our own will, and nothing else, is our wreck.

We should now,

III. Shew how people come to make solemn covenanting but a trifling business. But for this, see the third head of doctrine first.

We proceed, then,

IV. To shew the danger of trifling, and not making heart-work of this weighty business.—This will appear if we consider,

1. That the Lord rejects the work: Mal. i. 13, "Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts, and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord." Whatever pains persons may be at about covenanting, the Lord has no regard to it while it is not heart-work, Isa. i. 11. It is true, you may even sign the contract, but the Lord will not subscribe it, seeing it has not the upright consent of your hearts, Psalm l. 16, 17. You may expect the entertainment recorded, Matth. xxii. 12, "Friend, how camest thou in thither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."—Consider,

2. That it puts men more securely in Satan's grips than before. In this sense that holds true which you have in Isa. xxviii. 22, "Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." Publicans and sinners will enter before these. Such are twice dead, where the devil goes out and returns with seven other spirits worse than himself. The last end of such a person is worse than his beginning.—Consider,

3. That it exposes men to spiritual strokes; Jer. xlviii. 10, "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully." Deadening strokes. These are silent arrows which fly from the hand of God into the soul without noise; Isa. vi. 10, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;

lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Sometimes men are like Saul among the prophets, but afterwards they are knocked in the head by the secret judgment of God, because of their hypocritical dealing with him, it may be at a communion table, in so much that they have never a day to do well after; and from that time God answers them not, but they live and rot above the ground; their hearts are deadened, their affections dozened, their gifts withered, and their souls blasted; John xv. 6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Quickening strokes, whereby the man is dreadfully alarmed, the conscience is awakened, and made like Mount Sinai, where nothing but fire and smoke appear. God takes the filthy rags of their mock covenanting, wraps them in brimstone, and sets them in fire about the sinner's ears. Their wounds which were scurfed over bleed more dreadfully, while the plaster they made will not stick. Besides these, there are strokes upon their bodies. As Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1, 2. A wrong look into the ark cost the men of Bethshemesh dear, 1 Sam. vi. 19. God smote Uzzah, and he died by the ark, 2 Sam. vi. 7. And the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Consider,

*Lastly*, That however quietly people may get it carried in life, it will bring them a sad disappointment at death. The house built on the sand fell by the storm, and great was its fall. A great fall from high hopes into deep despair; like the foolish virgins, who were unexpectedly shut out.

We are now,

V. To apply the subject. Which we shall do only in an use of exhortation.

I would then exhort one and all of you to make heart-work and sure work in your covenanting with the Lord, and not to trifle in so solemn a business. You have heard the danger you incur by trifling with it. But perhaps some will say with a whole heart, that as they are resolved to keep themselves out of harm's way, they will not come to the Lord's table. To this I would answer, Well, will you not enter into covenant with the Lord? if not, then you will never see heaven; Eph. ii. 12, "Strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Where will you appear at the great day? Psalm l. 1—5. You must take hold of the Lord's covenant, or be damned. Sirs, if ye enter at all into this work, my exhortation reaches you. You may trifle with God upon your knees, as well as at his table. And if you be not

minded to refuse this covenant, why stand you back from the seals of it? why do you not prepare yourselves for it? why slight you this love token of our dying Lord? I would think if you were in earnest for the covenant, you would not slight the seal of it. Make sure work then. To induce you to be serious in this weighty work, I would mention and urge the following motives.

Mot. 1. You have need to make sure work, for you have deceitful hearts to deal with, Jer. xvii. 19. Let not the bands be put on slightly, or it will soon slip them all. Therefore dig deep, by serious solemn examination of your consciences before the Lord, that you may build as on a rock.

Mot. 2. Consider the weight of the business; the business of salvation, or damnation, is not a matter to trifle with. Sirs, life and death are before you. Your eternal state lies at the stake. I beseech you then, by all that weight of glory that awaits the saints, as you would not ruin your souls which a thousand worlds cannot repair, for the loss of the soul cannot be made up, that you seriously consider the business.

Mot. 3. Consider the Lord is not trifling, but is in good earnest with you; "O that there were such a heart in them!" There is a match proposed betwixt the King of glory and the daughter of Zion, the bridegroom is willing; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." There is nothing wanting on his part; Matt. xxii. 4, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage." How passionately does he call for her consent in the text: And now, when the Lord is thus offering himself to you, why will you refuse or trifle with him? Here some may propose this,

Objection. This is a flourish which may pass well enough in a pulpit. But, O! if the Lord were really offering himself to me, I would never refuse. To this I answer, The offer is real, though ministerial. We have our commission from our Lord to bear us out in it, and he would do the same if he were here bodily present; 2 Cor. v. 10, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Hence, in the days of his flesh, he offered himself both to those that did, and those that did not receive him. Consider, he said to his disciples, "He that heareth you, heareth me." We are the friends of the Bridegroom; as Abraham's servants, we are come to bring you to our Master's son. What would you have to make the offer real, if you may not take it as such from the mouth of his messengers? Would you have him leave his glory a second time, and come in person to make the offer? Or would you have him come down in his glory? If so, you know not

what you ask. It would set you better to do as Abigail, bow yourself to the earth, and humbly accept of the offer, 1 Sam. xxv. 40, 41. So real is the offer, that if you refuse, ye will be damned for the refusal; Mark xvi. 15, 16, "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." John xvii. 20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." See then what ye do. It is a serious business on the Lord's part, and there is a prize in your hands, which you would do well diligently to improve. Does he indeed offer himself to me? do you say? notwithstanding my unworthiness. Yea, to you, we make no scruple to offer him particularly to every one of you, the vilest of you all; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It is not unworthiness, but unwillingness, that will mar the bargain; "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is athirst say, Come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

## A RICH FEAST PREPARED FOR HUNGRY SOULS.*

## SERMON VII.

Isa. xxv. 6,

*And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.*

The prophets of old prophesied of the grace of Christ which should come unto us, 1 Pet. i. 10; and of these none more than our evangelical prophet, who, in the verse before us, foretells a rich spiritual entertainment which should be made by the Saviour Jesus Christ unto a starving world of prodigal sinners, reduced by their extravagance into extreme want. Here there is to be observed,

1. The Maker and Master of the feast, the Lord himself; it is a royal feast, with which the King of Zion entertains his own subjects. Particularly, it is the Lord Christ, the Son of God, who, pitying the

* An action-sermon, delivered June 7, 1719.

famished condition of poor sinners, was at the expense of this costly feast for them; for the maker of it is the same who swallows up death and victory, ver. 8. A warlike title is ascribed to him, the "Lord of hosts," for there is a banner in Christ's banqueting-house; and this feast looks both backward and forward to a war. You will observe,

2. The guests for whom this feast is provided: it is made for "all people." Not that every person does actually partake of it, nor that every person without exception is invited to it; the event shows the contrary, there being many to whom the sound of the gospel never comes; but intimating, that the invitation is given to all who come in its way, without distinction, or exception of any sort of persons; Matth. xxii. 9, "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." The invitation is to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, to those in the highways and hedges, as well as those in the city. All who will come are welcome. You may observe,

3. The guest-chamber where this feast is held; "In this mountain," namely, mount Zion, that is, the church. To that society all must join who would partake of this feast. And as mount Zion represents both the church militant and the church triumphant, so these are one church, one body; and it is one feast, as to its substance, Heb. xii. 22—24. You will observe,

4. The matter of the feast: a feast imports abundance and variety of good entertainment; and here nothing is wanting which is suitable for hungry souls. This is held forth under the notion of the best meat and drink, because what these are to the body, the same is the gospel-feast to the soul. In this valley of the world lying in wickedness, there is nothing for the soul to feed on but carrion, nothing but what would be loathed, except by those who were never used to better: but in this mountain, there is a "feast of fat things," things most relishing to those who taste them, most nourishing to those who feed on them; and these are "full of marrow," most satisfying to the soul.—In this valley of the world, there is nothing but muddy waters, which can never quench the thirst of the soul, but must ruin it with the dregs ever cleaving to them; but here, on this mountain, are "wines on the lees," that is, the best of wines, which having been kept long upon the lees, are therefore strong and nourishing. And these wines are well refined, being carefully drawn off, and quite separated from the lees or dregs, and therefore clear and fine. They are undreggy comforts; they afford the most refined satisfaction and delight. From this subject we take the following

Doctrine, That Jesus Christ has prepared a most rich and delicious feast for the souls of all those who will come to him, and partake of it as presented to them.

In speaking upon this pleasant and interesting subject, it is intended,

I. To shew the absolute need that there is of this provision.

II. To explain what the provision is which Christ has prepared for the souls of a famished world.

III. To consider what sort of a feast it is.

IV. To confirm, that all people who will come, may come, and partake of this feast. And then,

V. Conclude with a practical improvement of the subject.

We are then,

I. To show the absolute need that there is of this provision.

The distinguishing need for this provision was the extreme necessity of a lost world, which, by Adam's fall, the great prodigal, was reduced to a starving and famishing condition. The King of heaven set down Adam, and his posterity in him, to a well-covered table in paradise, in this lower world, making a covenant of friendship with him, and with them in him. Man consists of an earthly part and a heavenly part, a body, and a soul: and as every thing must have nourishment suitable to its nature, so, although the body might, yet the soul could never be nourished by the best produce of the earth. Therefore, by virtue of that covenant, it was concluded, that, upon condition of perfect obedience to it, they should have provision for their souls from the King's country. But man being drawn into rebellion against God, this prospect was lost, and their table is drawn; Adam and all his posterity in his loins were driven out of the guest-chamber, the family was ruined, broken, and scattered, having nothing left them.—To impress this the more upon us, let us view how our first father left us.

1. In point of need, he left us with hungry hearts, like the prodigal; Luke xv. 16, "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him." Every man and woman naturally has a gnawing appetite after happiness and satisfaction. This is so interwoven with man's nature, that it never leaves him in any state whatever, and so will make a part of the torment of the damned: Isa. viii. 21, "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their King and their God, and look upward." Every one finds himself not self-sufficient, and therefore his soul cleaves to something without itself to satisfy it. Listen, O Christless sinner!

who art destitute of holy desires, and thou shalt hear a voice within thine own breast, saying, Give, give, a continual noise. Look into thine own heart, and thou wilt see it, in respect of desires, like a nest of young birds, all gaping for a fill, but never satisfied, still gaping, after all that is put in their mouths.—He left us also with thirsty consciences, scorched and burned up with heat, so that most of them are in the dead-thraw, and many of them quite seared. Hence the gospel-invitation is, Isa. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." In a natural state there can be no conscience but an evil conscience, the thorn of guilt is not pulled out of it; it is a defiled conscience which needs to be sprinkled, Heb. x. 22. And though a sleeping conscience in many, yet such is the thirst of it in all the sons of Adam, that, when awakened, they cry out, We die, we perish, we all perish, Luke xv. 17.

2. In point of supply, he left us without any prospect, for all communication with heaven was stopped. War was declared against the rebels, so that there could be no transportation of provisions from thence, Gen. iii. 24. Truth had said, Gen. ii. 17, "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And therefore, though mercy might incline to supply a starving world, justice interposes, and pleads that there could be no communication betwixt God and the sinners, without a satisfaction, which they nor angels could not make; and therefore, without satisfaction, they must be famished for ever. Thus heaven's doors were closed on a starving world. —Now, there was a mighty famine upon the earth, such as was with the prodigal, Luke xv. 14, "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." Adam's sons, abandoned of Heaven, fell a-begging at the world's door, if so be they might find rest and satisfaction in the creature. They go after a law-righteousness, if so be they might find a rest to their consciences. But it fares with them in this search, as with the unclean spirit gone out of a man. He goes through dry places seeking rest, and finding none returns disappointed. When they have traversed all the mountains of vanity for something to satisfy their hungry hearts, they find nothing but husks to feed on with the swine; which are the empty and unsatisfying things of the world, that can never feed their souls, Luke xv. 16. The poor sinner out of Christ, is like the hungry infant, which sucks at every thing to which its mouth comes near, and shifting about, and getting nothing, falls a-weeping; but the appetite continuing, the infant falls a-sucking again, where formerly it was disappointed. Such is the life of every natural man, a continued tract of lustings after, and disap-

pointments from the creature. So that he is born weeping, lives seeking, and will die disappointed, if not brought to the feast of fat things. Again, they find but dust to feed on with the serpent ; Isa. lxv. 25, "And dust shall be the serpent's meat;" that is, they suck at the defiled breasts of their lusts, which can never satisfy, but poison the soul. They cannot find their satisfaction in lawful worldly comforts ; and therefore, like hungry beasts, they break over into forbidden ground, and all to satisfy a gnawing appetite after happiness. But there they are as far from their mark as ever. For, though the enjoyment of a lust may please them for a while ; yet it is but like a man, eating or drinking in a dream, he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul has appetite, Isa. xxiv. 8. There is a bitter dreg remaining behind. Striking at this rock for water, they cause fire to flash out on their faces ; and sucking at these breasts, draw out blood instead of milk. Travelling through the barren region of the law for something to satisfy their scorched consciences, they can find nothing but muddy and salt waters, which can give no ease truly satisfying, but raises the thirst again. For the purging of the conscience is what the law cannot do, Rom. vi. 3; compared with Heb. ix. 14. What can duties do to the purging of the conscience ; Isa. lxiv. 6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Will mud wash out mud ? What can tears do for this end ? Without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Even our tears must be washed in the Mediator's blood, or they will defile the conscience, and leave a new stain in it. What can trusting to uncovenanted mercy do ? and such is the mercy of God in respect of all who are not in Christ, Acts iv. 12; 2 Cor. v. 19. They may make a plaster for their wounded consciences of these, they may lay it on, but all their art can never make it stick, it will fall off before the wound heal.

We come now,

II. To explain what the provision is which Christ has prepared for the souls of such a famished world.—This, in a word, is his precious self; the Maker of the feast is the matter of it, even Christ crucified ; his body broken for us, is that feast to which hungry souls are called, and which they are to feed upon : "Take, eat, this is my body broken for you." Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." We have heard of mothers who have eaten their own children, but who ever gave them-

selves to be meat unto them? But Jesus died that we might live, gave himself to enliven and nourish our souls.—Let us consider,

1. The *meat* which is served up in this feast for the hungry heart. This is Christ's body; John vi. 55, "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Never was there such a costly feast in the world as this, Christ's body broken and bruised by justice, that it might be food to us. This is the provision offered to you all in the word, exhibited to you, O believers! in the sacrament. And ye may eat, and must eat of it, or you will perish: John vi. 53, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Take him by faith, receive him with a faith of application, and unite with him in the covenant; relish the sweetness of Christ, improve every part of Christ, his low birth, his sorrowful life, his bitter death, his burial, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.—Christ's body is the fat things of this feast, which will completely satisfy the hungry heart; so that thy soul feeding upon it by faith, shall be filled and satisfied, like the hungry infant, when it is set to its mother's full breasts: Psalm lxxxi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." How can these things be? will an unbelieving world say. We answer, in two things,

(1.) There is a fulness of the spirit of sanctification in him, which is communicated unto all who receive him: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." And the more eagerly that the soul feeds on him, the more of that spirit they receive. The first entering of his spirit into the soul gives life; the further measure of the spirit, gives life more abundantly. And there is a double effect of the spirit of sanctification received from Christ.—[1.] The spirit of Christ in the soul dries up the devouring deeps of unmortified desires after the world of lusts, stops their mouths by stabbing them to the heart, that the soul may live spiritually: John iv. 14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Never thirst, that is, at the rate he did in his natural state. Gasp they may, as a thief upon the cross, but they shall never gape so wide and so incessantly as before, the soul being determined to starve them.—[2.] The spirit of Christ in the soul stirs up holy desires in the heart, which are the predominant motions and affections there: Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The man's choice is altered, his desires run in

another channel. Sometimes it was, Who will shew us any good? but now it is, Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance, Psalm iv. 6. Now his longings are after the Lord, Psalm xlii. 1, and lxiii. 1. His sorrowings are for the want of his presence; his comfort is enjoying the light of his countenance. If he has a God in Christ to be his God, you may take from him what ye will; Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." Let these desires be satisfied, and he is filled as with marrow and fatness.

(2.) The fulness of the Godhead is in Christ: Col. ii. 9, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The tabernacle of meeting betwixt God and the sinner is the flesh of Christ; in him they have the enjoyment of God as their God. Taking Christ by faith, God is theirs, for he and the Father are one: thus in Christ they are complete, Col. ii. 10. They are at the utmost stretch of their desires as to the substance of them; for having God to be their God, they have all. And thus the soul may feed on all the perfections of God: on his power, as theirs to protect them; his wisdom, as theirs to guide, &c.; on his word and all the promises of it, which are theirs. Here there is both plenty and variety.—Let us consider,

2. The *drink* which is afforded at this feast for the thirsty conscience. This is the precious blood of Christ: John vi. 55, "My blood is drink indeed." This is that spiritual drink which is offered in the word, and exhibited in the sacrament: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." If ever you would have life, you must all drink of this blood, by a believing application of it to your own souls: Rom. iii. 25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—This is "wines on the lees, well refined," effectual for purging the conscience of the most guilty creature, when it is believingly applied to the soul: Heb. ix. 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" This blood is atoning blood, it answers all the demands of justice, affords a covert under which a guilty creature may stand before God, and not be condemned: Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."—It is sin-expiating blood, "shed for remission of sins unto many." Lay all your guilt over on this blood. It will blot out all the items out of the debt-book of justice; it will draw the sting out of your conscience, for which all other persons and things have been physicians

of no value.—It is peace-making blood. Lay the weight of your peace with God on it: "Christ is our peace," Eph. ii. 14.—It is justifying blood; by it is brought in an everlasting righteousness.—It is heaven-opening blood, for time, in access to God and communion with him on earth; and for eternity, that believers in it may be ever with the Lord, Heb. x. 19, 20. How can these things be? Why, in one word, this wine is the juice of the choice vine of heaven, it is the blood of the Son of God, and therefore of infinite value, 1 John i. 16. When the blood of bulls and of goats could avail nothing to cool the heat of scorched consciences, when rivers of oil, and the fruit of one's body, could avail nothing for the sin of the soul; the Son of God took on him man's nature, and in that nature died, shed his precious blood, to be a ransom for elect sinners, to deliver them from the pit, Job xxxiii. 22—30.

We are now,

III. To consider what sort of a feast it is.—Upon this we observe,

1. That it is a feast upon a sacrifice: 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore, let us keep the feast." Justice was provoked by the conduct of self-destroying sinners. God's anger was incensed against us, and the fire of his wrath has burned up many. And when wrath was gone out against the world, the great High Priest stept in, and offered up himself a sacrifice to atone for sin, and turn away divine wrath. Here we are called to a feast on that sacrifice, to partake of its virtue and efficacy.

2. It is a covenant-feast, Heb. xiii. 20, 21. When Jacob made the covenant with Laban, they feasted together on the mount, Gen. xxxi. 44—54. There is no partaking of this feast, but by the way of the covenant. All the guests must be covenanters, and they who are not pleased with the covenant of friendship and peace with God, as held forth in the gospel, cannot taste of this supper. But those who are well pleased with it, and sincerely consent to it, Christ says to them, "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

3. It is a marriage-feast, a marriage-supper, Matth. xxii. 1—4. The Lord Christ is the Bridegroom, and the captive daughter of Zion the bride. He offers himself to each of you to whom the gospel comes, to be yours in a marriage-relation. Consent then to the match, and ye shall eat of this bread, and drink of this wine which he hath mingled. He is yours, and you have all, which he hath purchased, to feed on for time and for eternity.

4. It is a feast which has a respect to war. The Lord of hosts made it. It looks backward to that terrible encounter which Christ had with the law, with death, with hell, and the grave, upon the ac-

count of his ransomed ones, and that glorious victory which he obtained over them, by which he wrought the deliverance of his people. The gospel-feast is a feast upon the back of that victory, and the Lord's supper is particularly a feast in commemoration of that battle and victory. It looks forward to a war: Song ii. 4, "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love." It is provided for and presented to his people to animate and strengthen them for the spiritual warfare against the devil, the world, and the flesh; and none can truly partake of it, but those who are resolved on that battle, and are determined to pursue it, till they obtain the complete victory at death.

*Lastly*, It is a weaning feast, Gen. xxiii. 8. There is a time prefixed in the decree of God, at which all who are his shall, by converting grace, be weaned from their natural food. And with this their sitting down to this feast agrees. Where is the soul which is now weaned from their sucking so long at the dry breasts of the world? that soul shall have the sweet enjoyment of this feast; and the more that they feed, the more they will be weaned.

We now proceed,

IV. To confirm, that all people who will come, may come, and partake of this feast. Not that all may immediately partake of the sacrament, but that all may and should receive Christ, with his benefits, offered to them in the gospel; they are made most heartily welcome.—To make this appear, consider,

1. Christ invites all without distinction, even the worst of sinners, to this spiritual feast: Isa. lv. 1, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." John vii. 37, "If any man thirst," said Jesus, "let him come to me and drink," Rev. xxii. 17, "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." These are gospel-invitations, clogged with no conditions, comprehending all who are willing to receive Christ, whatever their case is or has been.—Consider,

2. For what end does Jesus send out his messengers with a commission to invite all to come, if they were not welcome? Matth. xxii. 9, "Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." Nay, the Lord is very express in the welcome given to the worst of sinners, Jer. iii. 1; Isa. i. 18; and directs his messengers to invite the most unworthy and unsightly persons to this feast: Luke xiv. 21—33, "Go out quickly," says he, "into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."—Consider,

*Lastly*, That he takes it heinously amiss when any refuse to come: Luke xiv. 21, "He was angry;" angry, because those who were invited would not come. He not only invites you, but you are commanded on your peril to comply with the invitation: 1 John iii. 23, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And do what ye will, if ye slight the offer, ye cannot please him; for without faith it is impossible to please God.—It only remains, that,

V. We make some practical improvement; and this shall be confined for the present to a use of exhortation.

1. We would exhort all hungry hearts who are suing for satisfaction in the world and their lusts, and whose consciences have no solid resting-place, O! come to Jesus Christ in his covenant, and sit down to this feast prepared for you and the like of you.—To prevail with you, I would mention the following MOTIVES:—

MOT. 1. While ye come not to Christ, you have nothing commensurable nor suitable to the cravings of an immortal soul. All other things are but as stones or ashes, they are not bread; Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" The man was a fool, who bid his soul take ease from what he had in his barns. Nothing less than a God in Christ can ever satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul, a soul which was created capable of enjoying an infinite good. And nothing but the blood of the Redeemer will ever give solid peace to your consciences.

MOT. 2. Should not the continued tract of disappointments ye have met with at other doors, engage you to come to Christ's banqueting-house? Jer. iii. 23, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." Have you not always found creature-comforts greater in expectation than in fruition? How often have ye looked for much comfort, where you got little? And has not your greatest crosses arisen sometimes from those quarters whence ye expected your greatest comfort?

MOT. 3. In what ye are now pursuing, consider that there is not only vanity and emptiness, which will disappoint you, but there is death in the pot, which will destroy your souls. There needs no more to ruin you, but that you be left to your own heart's lusts, and take your swing. Fearful will the reckoning be, when so much time, pains, and labour, are laid out on the pursuit of the world, and the immortal soul is quite neglected as to its eternal welfare, Eccl. xi. 9.

MOT. 4. If you will come to Christ, ye shall get true rest; rest

to your hearts, rest to your consciences, Matth. xi. 28. Whatever your wants be, there is a suitable fulness in him; a fulness of merit, to carry off your guilt; a fountain, even the depth of the sea, to wash it away; a fulness of the Spirit to kill your corruptions; of righteousness to cover your unrighteousness; of light for your darkness; of strength for your weakness.

*Lastly*, Consider, if you will come, you shall be happy for time and eternity. When the lower table is drawn, you shall sit down at the upper. If not, you shall never know satisfaction, nor find rest to your souls.—I would exhort,

2. Communicants to feed on Christ at his table. Let not the feast be in vain to you. Dead sinners, those destitute of spiritual life, are not fit guests for the Lord's table, for they cannot feed. Such will eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body.—Here it may be inquired, How may one know if he has any spiritual life? To this we answer, Whosoever has spiritual life will be sincerely longing to be rid of the grave-clothes of sin; Matth. v. 6, "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." They will be content to part with all sin, and resolved henceforth to oppose every lust, as a limb of the body of death; not only sin in general, but the iniquity which is in their hearts, and with which they are most easily beset. They are willing also to lay aside the grave-clothes of self; Matth. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." They will look on the rags of their own righteousness but as grave-clothes also, and set themselves against all motions of this tendency. In a word, they are for doing all as if they were to win heaven this way; at the same time, overlooking all as if they were doing nothing.

Now, to you living and believing communicants, we acquaint you with Christ's welcome: Song v. 1, "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Take it and use freedom in his house. Eat, drink abundantly. Let your souls feast indeed at this gospel-feast, and miss not the opportunity.—I will only say to you, as the angel to Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 7, "And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." You have a great journey to go, and it is a question if you get such another meal set before you, ere you be at the end of it. You have a twofold journey, each of which requires you to eat.—You have,

1. Your journey through the world, towards the Canaan above. It is difficult at all times; so as that many never dare venture on it others never make it out, for it lies through many difficulties. The devil, the world, and the flesh, will struggle with you, to give over this

journey, of living well through the world. It is like to be more than ordinarily difficult in our times. A spirit of delusion threatens a dark and misty day. Labour to taste the power of truth, if you would be established in it. A Popish and malignant spirit threatens with darkness, blood, and confusion. This is evident, if we consider the apostacy in these nations from the once covenanted work of reformation, the blood of the saints yet lying at their doors, with the profanity and irreligion which is abounding among all ranks. As we have reason to think the Popish and malignant party in these nations, setting up for a Popish pretender, are infatuated of God to their own ruin, that they may get blood to drink; so we have ground to fear God may make them a scourge to the nations, and perhaps by them he may drive them to reformation. Whatever, then, the clouds may turn to, eat for a wilderness-journey.—You have,

2. Your journey out of the world, that is, to die well. It is a weighty journey from time to eternity. Eat for it this day, and do as you will wish to have done when you come to a dying-hour. It may be some will not have as much time to think on it when it comes, as they will have this day at a communion table. And that at a communion-table you may eat,—labour to have your appetite after Christ sharpened. Open your mouths wide, and he will fill them. Consider well your own needs, and his fullness.—Adore the wonderful condescension of the great God. Reverence his greatness; but beware of slavish fear and amazement. Look to God through the veil of Christ's flesh.—In a word, beware of unbelief. Rest not in a general faith, but exercise a faith of application: Gal. ii. 20 "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*. Amen.

THE DISTINGUISHING PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S FAITHFUL SERVANTS.*

## SERMON VIII.

EXOD. xxiv. 11,

*And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.*

THE Lord is calling us to come up to him into the mount of solemn ordinances; and though there be some who will abide at the foot of the hill, unconcerned and stupid, like Abraham's servant and the ass, I hope there are others who will desire to go forward, though it is likely there may be a struggle betwixt hope and fear about their entertainment there. How are your hearts affected upon this awful approach? are they saying within you, as these Greeks, "We would see Jesus?" Or, as the prodigal Jew, Luke xv. 17, "We perish with hunger." And at the same time with the men of Bethshemesh, 1. Sam. vi. 19, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" Our text gives you encouragement from this instance of the nobles of Israel. Upon God's call they came up to the mount; and (which divides the text into two parts), *first*, They were safe: "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand;" *Secondly*, They were kindly entertained: "Also they saw God, and did eat and drink."—We shall attend to these separately.

The *first* part is, they were safe in their approach. Moses remarks this, to the praise of the divine clemency in a Mediator, through whom sinners may see God, and not die. Sin has set man at such a distance from God, and put his body into such a weak and mouldering condition, that consciousness of guilt and a sight of the divine glory meeting together, is more than enough to exanimate and make him faint away, to break to pieces the corrupt earthen pitcher the soul dwells in. Hence it was a common opinion, that such a sight was deadly.—Consider here,

1. The parties whose safety is particularly remarked, the nobles of the children of Israel. Some reckon Nadab and Abihu among these; but if so, why not Moses and Aaron? It is plain they were all there, ver. 9, and 10. I think, however, it is only the seventy elders who are meant; and therefore it is expressed emphatically in the Hebrew, intimating, that not only was Moses, the typical Media-

* This and the following discourse were delivered at Maxton, August 11 and 12, 1716.

tor, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, who were designed to be priests, preserved; but even the elders, the representatives of the people, these also were safe.—You will accordingly observe, that the people are as welcome to the divine favour, and to gracious manifestations of God, as ministers. Tho' ministers be employed to open the doors of the temple, the people stand as fair for a sight of the glory within as they do. Though Moses, &c. went up foremost to the mount; yet no man should either value himself before the Lord, or be discouraged upon the character which he bears. Ordinarily, people will pray that ministers may be helped in their public ministrations, to preach, &c.; but they should even also be concerned, that they may be helped to believe, taste, feel, and feed, with the rest of the children.

They were nobles, great men, rulers of the people; yet they went up to the mount with Aaron, and sat down to the sacred feast there, after they had taken the national covenant of Israel with the rest of the people, ver. 8 9.—You will thence observe, that it is the honour of the nobles of a land to see God, and to be seen upon the mount with God, at the sacred feast, as covenanters with him. This was some time the honour of Scotland's nobility and gentry; they were forward in the national covenant with God; and we have heard the days have been, when scarlet-cloaks and velvet-hoods bare great bulk in such meetings as this. But, ah! how is our gold become dross! they leave these things now mostly to the common people, with contempt of both. What wonder is it that they have been left to make themselves the tail, and not the head! to row us into deep waters, where the state is sunk, and the church is broken: to turn Babel-builders, so that for once the scaffolding is broken, and the builders, with many others, heavily crushed. For, "these that honour God, he will honour; but they that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed."

There were seventy of these nobles, the number of the children of Israel when they went down to Egypt, and so a fit number to represent the body of the people, who were now solemnly taken into covenant with God. God saw it not meet to give this sight of the divine glory to the multitude, and to set all down to the sacred feast on the mount; but, since it was covenant-entertainment, the seventy were brought to it, as the representatives of the people. Thus also the New-Testament church is represented by twenty-four elders about the throne, Rev. iv. 4 —From this you may learn, that safe communion and fellowship with God is the privilege of the church of believers, the Israelites indeed.—That all the people of God have not alike nearness of access to God; some come farther forward than others.

Peter, James, and John, were taken up to the mount of transfiguration, and not the rest of the apostles.—That it is a mercy to have an interest in, and relation to, these who are brought near to God, especially such as will act for us in the mount with God. There may be some young ones here, whose fathers or mothers are to approach the table of the Lord. I would advise them to tell them to mind them there. Say, "I cannot go, but, O! give up my name to Christ, consent you in my name to the covenant, and tell your covenanted God, I am also content to be his." Or, if you have not father or mother, tell any other godly person ye know. And so may one distressed Christian do with another: Song, v. 8. "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem! if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love."——We may observe,

(2.) How their safety is expressed: "He laid not his hand upon them," that is, did not hurt or destroy them, Gen xxxvii. 22. Though they saw God, (ver. 10.) yet they died not, their lives were preserved. This imports, that he might in point of justice have laid his hand on them. They were sinful creatures; and though they were on the mount of God, yet they had a sinful nature with them, which did leave the marks of it even upon what they did there. But he overlooked their weakness, and in mercy spared them. This instructs us, that when we are at our best, if God should mark our iniquity, we could not stand before him. We are ever in mercy's debt, and cannot be one moment safe without being under the covert of blood. Even in heaven, it is under that canopy the saints will feast for ever, Heb. vii. 25.—It also imports, that the weight of his hand would have crushed them. If he had but laid it on them, it would have done their business. If he had but put forth his hand and touched them in wrath, they would have gone like a moth with a touch of the hand.—From this we may learn the utter weakness and nothingness of the creature before the Lord. He can touch it to destruction, and can frown it back, when he will, into the womb of nothing. Why, then, should we strive with our Maker?—More particularly, that the greatest of men are nothing before the great God; *Upon the nobles he laid not his hand.* Though they caused terror to their inferior fellow-creatures, they were as unable to bear the terror of God as the meanest in the camp of Israel. All flesh is alike before God.——You will observe,

(3.) How they came to be safe. The word *nobles* signifies select, separate ones, who had been set apart. They were selected out of the covenanted body of the people, to come up into the mount to the Lord, at his call. Moses gets an order for so many to come up with him, ver. 1. Having that order, he first proposes a covenant

to the people, and they declare their acceptance, ver. 3.; then he writes the words of the covenant, and the covenant is most solemnly entered into, ratified, and sealed; there is an altar built to represent God in Christ, ver. 4, and twelve pillars to represent the twelve tribes. Thus these were the parties. Sacrifices were offered, ver. 5, shewing the covenant to be founded on the blood of a Mediator. The half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, ver. 6, shewing it was not an absolute God with whom they were to covenant, but a God atoned by the blood of a crucified Saviour. Then he read the book of the covenant; thus proposing it to the people; and their second thoughts are as their first, they solemnly consent to it, ver. 7.; and he sprinkles the rest of the blood on them, and so it was sealed and ratified. Then, after all this, he and these selected elders go up to the mount, in obedience to the call formerly given; and there they saw God, and were safe notwithstanding. Thus, their separation was their security. From which you may observe, That there is safety in following God's call, be the calling never so high. Had any of the people attempted to have gone whither they went, they had smarted for it; but being called, they were safe. Some, who measure reverence of God more by their own carnal wisdom than by God's word, cry out on us for not kneeling, but sitting, at the Lord's table. But though sitting be a gesture of more familiarity than kneeling, yet seeing it is instituted,we may expect more safety in it than in their kneeling, which at the Lord's table, wants both precept and example,—We now come to the

*Second* part of the verse. They were kindly entertained in their approach: *Also* (or but) *they saw God, and did eat and drink.*—Here observe,

1. A glorious sight which they got.—Where consider,

(1.) The object, God more largely expressed, ver. 10, "The God of Israel." Not any visible resemblance of the divine nature, but some glorious appearance and token of God's special presence. Our Lord Jesus Christ was known to the Old Testament church by this name, the God of Israel. And that this was the Son of God, seems very plain from that word, ver. 1, "He said, Come up unto the Lord." Compare ch. xxiii. 20—23, with Exod. iii. 2—8. Now, he who sends is the Father, and it is the same who speaks here; and he speaks of another person, who also is the Lord. And, seeing we read of his feet, ver 10, he seems to have appeared in a glorious human shape, as a pledge of his future incarnation. This, then was a most glorious sight of Jesus Christ. Nothing is here described but what was under his feet; though the text seems to intimate they saw more, an

inconceivable glory which mortals cannot make words of.—Consider,

(2.) The act, "they saw." This seeing imports something more than in ver. 10, for it is evident that the first part of the verse relates to that seeing, ver. 10. And so the sense requires something more to be in this. Accordingly, they are different words in the original; this here signifies to contemplate and fixedly behold; from it our word gaze seems to be derived. It might be read, "They beheld God;" importing, not a transient glance, but a fixed view: John i. 14, "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" which is still more admirable condescension, and accordingly it is emphatically expressed.

Now, consider this as following upon the solemn transaction of the covenant made by sacrifice.—It holds out to us, (1.) That the great end of the covenant, next to the divine glory, is the happiness of the covenanters in seeing and enjoying God. There it is completed. And beyond this the creature cannot go.—(2.) That not the sight of an absolute God, but of a God in Christ, is the covenanters happiness. None can see God in mercy but they, for there is no other way but that of the covenant; and their happy sight is no thing other than a sight of God in Christ. In Christ, all the lines of our hope meet for time and eternity. Observe,

2. A blessed feast of which they were partakers: "They did eat and drink."—Here consider,

(1.) What they did, "they did eat and drink" upon the mount. They feasted upon the remains of the sacrifices of the peace-offerings, ver. 5. And this in token of their hearty satisfaction with the covenant now made, their ready acceptance of the benefits of it, and their communion with God in pursuance of it. Thus the believers feeding on Christ and gospel-dainties is expressed in scripture: Psalm xxii. 25, 26, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation; I will pay my vows before them that fear him; the meek shall eat, and be satisfied." Thus they were admitted to a holy familiarity with God, to eat and drink in his presence: "They saw him, and they did eat and drink."—Consider,

(2.) How they did it, with holy joy and comfort. This is implied in the connection, or opposition betwixt the parts of the text. They were so far from being slain with the sight, that they were not faithlessly frightened at it; but with a holy composure of spirit, they did eat and drink. What they saw was not like a cloudy sky to damp them, but as a clear one to refresh them. Holy reverence is necessary, but faithless fears in solemn approaches to God, are displeasing to him, and hurtful to our own souls, for they hinder us

from eating. Happy they who can believe and fear.—From this subject, we may take the following DOCTRINES, viz.

DOCTRINE I. That a sight of God in Christ, and a holy familiarity with him, with all safety, is the privilege of God's covenant-people, especially in these solemn approaches to which he calls them.

II. That it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, see God, and are familiar with him, and yet come off safe.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That a sight of God in Christ, and a holy familiarity with him, with all safety, is the privilege of God's covenant-people, especially in these solemn approaches to which he calls them.

In handling this doctrine, we shall,

I. Shew what is that sight of God in Christ, which is the privilege of his people in their solemn approaches to him.

II. What is that holy familiarity which is their privilege in their solemn approaches to him. And then,

III. Improve the subject.

We are then,

I. To shew what is that sight of God in Christ, which is the privilege of his people in their solemn approaches to him.—There is a twofold solemn approach of God's people to him.—There is a right approach,

1. When God calls them up to the mount of myrrh, where our Lord abides till the day break, Song iv. 6; when he calls them to come up to the hill of God in Immanuel's land, where stands the King's palace, namely heaven. This call comes to the believing soul at death. Then, as Rev. iv. 1, there is a door opened in heaven to the heaven-born soul, which is now, as it were, wrestling in a mire of corrupt flesh and blood in the body, and the voice is heard, Come up hither. This will be a solemn approach when the soul of the meanest believer shall go up thither, attended with a company of holy angels, and, like Lazarus, be carried by them into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22.—It will come to both souls and bodies of believers at the last day: Psalm l. 5, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." And then God's covenant-people, who dwell in the dust, shall awake from their sleep, come out of the lowly darksome house of the grave, and enter into the King's palace, Psalm lxv.—Then they shall see God in Christ to the completing their happiness for ever. Then they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. 1 John iii. 2. We know little now of this sight in glory, 1 Cor. ii, 9; but it vastly transcends all sights got of him here.—There it

will be immediate, they shall see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.—Perfectly transforming, 1 John i. 2.—Everlasting, without interruption, without intermission. They shall be ever with the Lord. But on this we insist not. There is a right approach,

2. When God calls them to come up to the mount of ordinances, to meet him at the sacred feast, as the nobles of Israel in the text, and as we at this time are called, to feast on the great sacrifice in the sacrament. This is a solemn approach. Now, what is the sight of God in Christ which is the privilege here? As to this we observe,

(1.) That it is a believing sight of God in their nature, John i. 14, (above). The nobles saw the Son of God in human shape, with their bodily eyes. But the great design of it was to shew the privilege of the saints by faith. O glorious sight! to see God in our nature, the divine nature, in the person of the Son, united to our nature? O high privilege! to sit at his table, and under the teaching of his Spirit, to spell the glorious name Immanuel, God with us. O the sweetness of every letter and syllable! God the fountain of all holiness and happiness, we, the sink of all sin and misery: yet God with us. The personal union, the foundation of the mystical union; and so an holy God and sinful creatures are united through Christ. We observe,

(2.) That it is a sight of this God in the place of his special residence; on the mount to which they were invited, where he stood, as it were, on a pavement of sapphire. It is their privilege to see him on the mount of ordinances, at his table, the glorious place of his feet, Isa, xxv. 6, 7. O the high privilege of the saints! We were all born under a sentence of death, to see the Lord no more in the land of the living, and (as in Haman's case, Esth. vii. 8.) as the word goes out of the King's mouth, our face is covered. Some live all their days in this case, come to communion-tables, and go away in it. But the believer laying hold on the covenant, Christ draws off the face-covering, and then, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. They see the bread, the Lord.

(3) It is a sight of the glory of the place of his feet, ver. 10. It is a promise relating to gospel-days: Isa. lx. 13, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the face of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." The ark in the temple, and gospel-ordinances in the gospel-church. It is their privilege to see a glory there, where the world see none; to see a majesty in the sacrament,

a spiritual glory and heavenly lustre in the bread and wine at the Lord's table, as sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 29. This glory and majesty in the ordinances, must be discerned by faith; and because it is beyond the stretch of the natural eye, therefore carnal wisdom in Rome, and the church of England, has gone about to supply its place with a great deal of external pomp, that may work upon the senses, defacing the simplicity of the institution. But after all, to a spiritual discerner, the external glory is as far below the spiritual glory, as artificial painting would in the eyes of the nobles have been below the natural clearness of the body of heaven.

(4.) It is a sight of God as reconciled in Christ. They saw God, and did eat and drink as in the house of their friend. This is the sight to be seen in the gospel-glass, 2 Cor. v. 18—20. A refreshful sight to a soul pained with the sting of guilt. Christ has died, and his blood has quenched the fire of God's wrath against the sinner; so that when on the mount he looks to the Lord, he sees as it were a clear sky under his feet: a sure token, that the storm is blown over, that there is peace from heaven, and an offended God is reconciled to us through his own Son.

(5) It is a sight of God as their God. They saw the God of Israel. Here lay the surpassing sweetness of their sight. Such a sight got Thomas, when his faith got up above his unbelief: John xx. 28, "My Lord, and my God." And for this sight is the sacrament especially appointed, that the child of God may say, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. The nature of the ordinance leads to it, which brings the word preached in the general to every believing communicant in particular: "This is my body broken for you."

*Lastly*, It is a sight of transcendent glory in him. Nothing is described but what was under his feet. For, search the universe, there is no person, no thing like him. Even what was under his feet, is described to have been a sapphire stone. But the best things on earth are not sufficient to set forth the glory even of this, and therefore it is added, "as if it were the body of heaven in his clearness." They who see him, see that of which they can never see the like.

We are now,

II. To shew what is that holy familiarity which is the privilege of God's people in their solemn approaches to him.—It is a believing, holy, humble freedom before their Lord! Eph. iii. 12, "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." In the sight before us, the sense of their own unworthiness, and a sight of his glory, did not mar their faith, nor put them in an

unbelieving frame. They did eat and drink; neither did the familiarity of faith mar their holy fear, or make them forget their distance: compare v. 1, where they were commanded to worship afar off, which no doubt they did. I will mention some instances of familiarity allowed them,

1. They were allowed to come forward to God, when others must stand back, Isa. lvi. 6, 7; when others must abide at the foot of the hill, (and it is at their peril if they venture forward), believers may come up to the mount, and are welcome. They have a token from the Master himself: Song v. 1, "Eat, O friends! drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!"

2. They were allowed to feast on the sacrifice set before them. Christ the sacrifice typically slain, and believers are allowed to feast on this sacrifice, to eat his flesh and drink his blood; to make a believing application of a whole Christ to their own souls for their spiritual nourishment: "Take, eat, this is my body, broken for you." You know what it is to feed your eyes on some pleasant object that is your own. The covetous man can feed his eyes on his bags of money. So believers are allowed to feed their eyes on Christ; beholding, and delighting in Christ; solacing themselves with his sweetness, and the sweetness of every part of the mystery of Christ.

3. They were allowed to converse with God freely, as one at the table of his friend. The peace being made by accepting of the covenant, the nobles were, and all believers are, set down to the feast in token of their communion with him: 1 John i. 3, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The believer has liberty to tell the Lord all his mind, Eph. iii. 12, (quoted above); to unbosom himself to a gracious God, and point particularly at what he would have, what he would be quit of. "What is thy petition?" says the King at the feast.

4. They were allowed to be in his secrets, to see what others have no access to. They *saw God.* Believers are allowed to see the glory of his person, John i. 14, (above.) The glory of his covenant: Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant."—The glory of his redeeming, his everlasting love to them: Jer. xxxi. 3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."—The hidden glory of his word; Luke xxiv. 32, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Hence,

*Lastly,* They were allowed to lay all their wants on him. When believers come to the mount, in his light they see light clearly, and at his table they are fed. Christ says to his guests, as Judges xix.

20, " Peace be on thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me." Psalm lv. 22, " Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The Lord allows his people to lay all their burdens upon him;—the burden of their debt, the guilt of sin, he will answer for it;—the burden of the strength of sin: Micah vii. 19, " He will subdue our iniquities."—The burden of our duties, and throughbearing in the way of God: 2 Cor. xii. 9, " My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—The burden of afflictions, crosses, trials; Isa. xliii. 2, " When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," &c.—The burden of their families; Jer. xlix. 11, " Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."—The burden of their souls for time and for eternity: Isa. xlvi. 4, " And even to your old age, I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear: even I will carry and will deliver you."

We now come,

III. And last place, to make some practical improvement.—And as a suitable improvement, we may observe, that this doctrine, like the cloudy pillar, has a dark and a bright side.—Dark to those that are not in the covenant.—Bright to all God's covenanted people.

1. It has a dark side to all natural men, strangers to the covenant, who are none of God's covenant-people.—Such are these,

(1.) Who are grossly ignorant of the doctrine of the covenant. It is a promise of the covenant: John vi. 45, " It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, cometh to me." And therefore, such as are not thus taught, are not in it. No person stumbles in the dark into this covenant.

(2.) Those who never found the intolerable weight of the first covenant, the law. Ye cannot be in both covenants at once, Rom. vii. 4. And if ye be brought into the second, ye have found the yoke of the first intolerable; Gal. ii. 19, " For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Ye have been awakened to see your natural misery, and your utter inability to help yourselves by your doing or suffering; to despair of salvation in any other way, but through the obedience and death of a Redeemer.

(3.) Those who were never yet pleased with the frame of the covenant as God made it, who in all their pretended closing with Christ, have still had some secret reserves as to some beloved lust, or as to the cross.

(4.) Those who are still in league with their lusts, their hearts never divorced from them: " If ye take me," says Christ, " let these go away." If Christ get the throne, the most beloved lusts will be

crucified.—It has a dark side to you as long as you continue in this state. It accordingly says to you,

If you see God at all, it will be a dreadful sight you will get of him. It will be the sight of an absolute God out of Christ, breathing out fury and vengeance against you. And he that is a refreshing sun to others, will be a consuming fire to you. And how will you be able to abide this sight? Isa. xxxiii. 14.—It says again, Though you come to his table, you cannot come in safety. You run a dreadful risk while you go thither, breaking up into the mount, without a warrant from the Lord. And it is a dangerous business for an unholy soul to be found in holy ground, 1 Cor. xi. 29.—It says also, Though ye sit down at the feast, ye cannot taste the sweetness of it, the sap and juice of it, namely, a sight of God in Christ as your own God; and a holy familiarity with him as such will be denied you. For what have ye to do with the covenanted-feast, who are strangers to the covenant itself?—It says, lastly, If ye snatch at the saints' familiarity with God, you put forth your hand to that to which you have no right, and go beyond God's allowance. Remember, Matth. xv. 26, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." And therefore you can expect no other than this entertainment: Matth. xxii. 12, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless."—But as this text and doctrine has a dark side to those who are not in the covenant,

2. It has a bright side to all God's covenant-people. Here is your privilege, O covenanters! you who are savingly in covenant. Ye are come into covenant, ye are divorced from the law; Rom. vii. 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is risen from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." If divorced from the law, ye have given it fair count and reckoning at parting, and fallen on a way of payment to it; for the covenant to which you now belong was not made but by sacrifice. Some are like an obstinate woman, who will not stir out of her husband's house, though he should slay her; these are desperate ones. Some like a foolish woman, who runs away from her husband, without suing out a divorce, or reckoning with him for the wrongs done to him; these are the presumptuous, whom the law will bring back from the horns of the altar. But Christ's spouse, at parting with the law, acknowledged all its demands just; but being sensible of utter inability to pay, goes to Christ as the great cautioner, and turns it over upon him for all.—If divorced from the law, the law also will be dead to you. Where one is divorced from

the first husband, he is as dead to her. The stream of your comfort by the law will be dried up, and it will flow from Christ alone. You will rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. You will not draw your comfort from your repentance, resolutions, vows, or reformation; but from the application of the blood of the covenant.

2. If ye be come into the covenant, your league with your lusts is broken. Though sin cleaves close to you, your hearts are loosed from it, and turned against it, Rom. vii. 17. You will hate it for itself, for its contrariety to the holy nature and law of your covenanted God, and not for the grievous consequences of it on yourself only. It will be to you as the fetters on the captive, he cannot get loose of them; but well he knows they are not his choice, though they were of gold.—Your hearts will be loosed from all sin, your hearts will hate it universally; Psalm cxix. 128, "I hate every false way." You will have a special eye for evil on your iniquity, so that you will gladly yield the offending right eye to be plucked out, and give your consent to the cutting off of the right-hand idol.—In a word, you have taken Christ, not for a shelter to your sins, but for a destroyer to them, 1 Cor. i. 30. Your business with the Mediator of the covenant will be as much for sanctification as justification, to partake of his holiness as well as his righteousness, his Spirit as well as his blood, Matth. i. 21.

*Lastly*, Ye have come into the covenant, if ye have the covenant's mark. The beast has his mark, and many are fond of it this day. Christ has also his mark, which he sets on his covenant-people.—There is the ear-mark; John x. 27, "My sheep," says he, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." See also Exod. xxiv. 7. Christ bores the ears of all that are his. They are taught of God, and have taken Christ for their teacher; they have a certain sense suited to discern Christ's voice from that of others, agreeable to their new nature: "A stranger they will not follow." They know the voice of their beloved, Song ii. 8. They look to him to be taught the way in which they should go; their ears are open, and their hearts willing to know his will, that they may do it. They wish to have shown them his truths, his ways, and ordinances, that they may cleave to them, Acts ix. 6.—Again, There is a fire-mark: Luke xiv. 26, 27, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." He reconciles all his to the cross; and they are content to follow him at all hazards, and are fully resolved to follow the Lamb,

whithersoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4; to side with him whoever side against him, being determined neither to be bribed nor boasted from him. Now, this doctrine has a bright side to all such, and bespeaks them as from the holy mount in this manner:

1. Come up hither to the Lord. Rise, the master calleth you to the feast at his table. Come in, ye blessed of the Lord, to Christ's banqueting-house, why stand ye without? Trample on all your doubts, whether they arise from the heaven above you, or from hell within you, and come forward to that God whose covenant you have laid hold on.

2. If you open your eyes, ye shall get a glorious sight of God in Christ. A sight which will be satisfying, and will darken all created glory. Though but bread and wine appear at his table, a greater than Solomon is there. Only believe; faith is the eye of the soul. Let us not have occasion to challenge your hearts after this communion with that which Christ said, John xi. 39, "Take ye away the stone."

3. Use a holy freedom in Christ's house, for he allows you. And do not reckon yourself a stranger at his table, seeing the feast is to confirm the covenant, Song v. 1. Make a believing application of all the benefits of his purchase. Say first of all, Song v. 16, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend;" and then conclude, that with him all is yours.

*Lastly*, Fear not, O trembling soul! Entertain indeed a profound reverence of God, but away with your faithless fears, which confuse and discompose the soul on the mount with God. Remember, upon the nobles he laid not his hand. Being in the covenant, you are under a covert of blood, and, by virtue of it, may assuredly expect, safety.—Here some may propose this question, How shall we manage that we get this sight? To which I answer,

Be exercised to take up the covenant in a suitable manner, ver. 4—1. Take some time this night by yourselves, and consider the covenant,—your undone state without it,—the suitableness of it to your case,—the absolute necessity of being in it. Labour to understand it, and examine yourselves, as to your willingness to come into it.—Solemnly enter this night into the covenant, ver. 3. Though ye have done it before, do it again, and do it with more heartiness, ver. 7. Let this solemn transaction with God go before your solemn approach, and do not venture to set God's seal to a blank, to sit down at his table, while ye have not honestly accepted of his covenant.—Again, sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on your souls, before ye venture to go forward, ver. 8. Apply Christ's blood by faith to your own souls, laying the weight of all your guilt over upon it;

believing firmly, that it is sufficient to purge you from all sin; and in this way come forward to the Lord with holy boldness, under the covert of this blood.—Once more, shake off all worldly thoughts and affections: labour to be in a heavenly frame; the nobles left the crowd at the foot of the hill, and went up into the mount. Put off your shoes, when you come on this holy ground.—Still farther, come forward under a due sense of the command of God; they went up because they were called, and so must you from conscience of Christ's command: "Do this in remembrance of me." Labour to have the sense of this command increased upon your spirits, as necessary to produce suitable obedience.—Lastly, open the eyes of faith, and look; the mouth of faith and eat what is set before your soul there, a slain Saviour, with all his benefits. Amen.

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GOSPEL PRIVILEGES WONDERS OF GRACE

## SERMON IX.

Exod. xxiv. 11,

*And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.*

Having, in the preceding discourse, considered the first doctrine taken from these words, we go on to a short illustration of

Doctrine II. That it is a wonder of grace, that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, are favoured with special sights of, and an holy familiarity with him, and yet come off safe.

In speaking to this point, we shall,

I. Shew that it is a wonder of grace, that sinful creatures are admitted to see God, and to be familiar with him.

II. Show that it is a wonder that in their solemn approaches, and when they are thus favoured, yet they come off safe.

III. Explain how it comes to pass, that their safety, when thus favoured, is secured.—And then,

IV. Make some short improvement.

We are,

I. To shew that it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures are admitted to see God, and be familiar with him. We think we need say little for proof of this. Only consider,

1. The infinite distance that there is between God and the creature in respect of perfection. The distance betwixt an angel and a

moth is but finite; but betwixt God and us the distance is infinite. And therefore, no wonder that beholding the glorious perfections of God, we dwindle into nothing in our own eyes, and say with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27, "Behold now, we have taken upon us to speak unto the Lord, which are but dust and ashes;" and cry out with Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 27, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" Remember, ye saints that though God has laid by his enmity, he retains his sovereignty over us; and therefore it is admirable condescension, that he is pleased to allow us to see him, and to enjoy holy familiarity with him. Consider,

2. That it is the same God who is such a severe and dreadful avenger of sin; Psalm v. 5, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Hab. i. 13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." This same God who allows his covenant-people a sight of his glory, and a holy familiarity with him on the mount of ordinances, is he who thurst Adam out of paradise,—drowned the old world,—rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. He who gives some the cup of salvation at his table, is the same who makes others of their fellow-creatures drink the wine-cup of his fury. He who makes some feast in his presence, is the same from whose presence others shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

We are,

II. To show that it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, and when they are thus favoured, come off safe. This will appear if we consider,

1. The infinite holiness and spotless purity of that God before whom the sinful creature appears. He is glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, Exod. xv. 11. Even angelical purity is dim in his light, and is a sort of impurity, when compared with the infinite holiness of God, Job xv. 15. Even they are chargeable with folly in his sight; potential folly, (though not actual), a kind of imperfection inseparable from the nature of the creature, in any state whatsoever; Job iv. 18, "Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and all his angels are charged with folly." (*Hebrew*, He puts, chargeth). And therefore, even the confirmed angels cover their feet with their wings, Isa. vi. 2, as if they would tell us that perfect created holiness is but a dark and smoky light before uncreated holiness. Shining holiness in some of the saints on earth, has a damping power with it. The very sight of one that convincingly walks close with God, is enough to strike a damp on the heart of a

loose professor or apostate. How much more may the sight of infinite holiness strike the most spiritual saints to the ground! Consider,

2. That the best carry a sinful nature even up into the mount with them. Paul, rapt up to the third heavens, brought a sinful nature down with him again, an evidence he had carried it up, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Look on thyself, O saint! in thy nearest approaches, and thou wilt see the humbling sight, a sinful heart, life, and lips, Isa. lxiv. 6; sin woven into thy very nature, and mixed with thy flesh and blood, making a vile body, Phil. iii. 21; sunk into the marrow of thy spirit, and diffused through thy whole soul. And then canst thou cease to say, as in Lam. iii. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Is it not a wonder of grace, that hell, so near heaven, has not sunk with its own weight? Consider,

3. That sinful creatures never miss to leave the marks of their foul feet, even when they are on holy ground. Rom. vii. 21 "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Peter falls a-roving even on the mount, Luke ix. 33. Even in the greatest light which ever shone about the saints, they never wrote a line so fair, but there was a blot in it. The sacrifices were carried up to the mount with the nobles, for God knew they would need them even there. And if ye will look back to your carriage, when at a communion table, you will see such mismanagements, as may make you wonder that he laid not his hand upon you. Consider,

4. The particular jealousy which God has manifested about his worship. Therefore Joshua told the people, chap. xxiv. 19, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God: he is a jealous God: he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins." And he himself declared, "he would be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified," Lev. x. 3. And upon this he wrote a commentary, with flaming evidence, in the blood of Nadab and Abihu, even two of these on whom he laid not his hand at this time. A slip in the holy ground is most dangerous and provoking in its own nature. To affront a king in his palace, his presence-chamber, or on his throne, stirs up his anger with a peculiar keenness. How dear did the men of Bethshemesh pay for a look, 1 Sam. vi. 19; Uzzah, for a touch, 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7; Ananias and Sapphira, for a word, Acts v. Now, who is able to stand before the piercing eye of his jealousy? Is it not a wonder of his grace, that the fire of his indignation burns not up sinful creatures in their solemn approaches to him? Consider,

5. That there is a solemn awfulness about the very ordinances of

grace, which the sinner could not bear if he were not supported, Dan. x. 8, 9—19. Psalm lxviii. 35, "O God! thou art terrible out of thy holy places." Jacob understood this when he had one of the most comfortable sights which ever mortal had: Gen. xxviii. 17, "And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The very throne of grace stands on justice and judgment, which are its habitation, Psalm lxxxix. 14. (*Hebrew*, its base); the covenant founded on blood, the blood of his own Son. All our mercies from the throne are dyed red in the blood of a Mediator. Thou canst not have a gracious look from the throne, but through the Redeemer's wounds; nor a pardon, but what is written with his blood. So that such sights are sufficient to make one faint away, if they are not supported by grace. Consider,

*Lastly*, That the emanations of the divine glory would overwhelm sinners, burst the earthen vessels, if a gracious God did not graciously support them. Some have felt this, when they have been made to cry to the Lord to hold his hand, for the earthen pitchers were able to hold no more. We know not what spirit we are of. It is our mercy we see but through a glass darkly, and not face to face now; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. xv. 50. The flesh and blood of a giant would not be able to bear that glory now. And therefore, it is observed as an instance of his goodness, Job xxvi. 9, "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it."

We now go on,

III. To explain how it comes to pass that the safety of God's people, when thus favoured, is secured. It is so,

1. Because they are God's covenant-people by marriage with his Son. They are married to Christ, and the Son of the Father's bosom is their husband. He has all freedom in his Father's house, and so it cannot be a strange house to them. Where he sits, his spouse may stand safely at his hand: Psalm xlv. 9, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." They have freedom in the house of God, in the right of their Husband. He has brought them up into his chariot of the covenant; and this has access to drive up into the mount, while it procures all safety to those who are in it, "being paved with love," Song iii. 9, 10.

2. Because they come up under the covert of the Redeemer's blood, Heb. xii. 22—24. By faith, they have the propitiation, whereby God is atoned, and becomes their friend, Rom. iii. 25. The flesh of a slain Saviour is a sufficient screen from divine wrath, and his red garments from the canopy under which they may safely feast while on the mount. Their safety is secured,

3. Because God looks on them as in his own Son, and not as in themselves; and so after a sort he overlooks their infirmities: Numb. xxiii. 21, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." He looked on them in Adam, their first representative, and so drove them out of his presence; but now he looks upon them in Christ as their head, and so brings them in again. And, O! but they look fair in him, each one resembles the son of a king. In Jesus they are complete, Col. ii. 10; Song iv. 7, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." They are safe,

4. Because, though they be unclean creatures, they come up into the mount, to bathe in the fountain opened there, for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. They come to the blood of sprinkling. A physician will not drive away his patient, because his running sores drop in his chamber. I will bear with this, says he, for the poor man has come to get himself healed. Their safety is secured,

*Lastly*, Because it is the end of the covenant, to bring them to God. Jacob might well promise himself to see Joseph, when the waggons were come from him for that very end, to bring him to him, Gen. xlv. 27, 28. The covenant looks very very low, as low as the earth, to secure the believer's daily bread, Isa. xxxiii. 16. Nay, in the bowels of the earth, to bring forth his dead body, mouldered in ashes: "I am the God of Abraham." Nay, as low as hell: "And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell," Psalm lxxxvi. 13. And it looks very high, to bring the believer up into the midst of the mount of enjoyment with God in ordinances, nay, to the top of the mount, to bring them to where the Lord of glory dwells, where they shall see him as he is: Isa. xxxiii. 17, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

It only remains, that,

IV. We make some improvement of this subject.

1. Let us, then, never more think lightly of solemn approaches to God, whether in private or in public ordinances. O! it is sad to think of our rashness in venturing on holy duties, not considering that in these we sist ourselves in the awful presence of God: Eccl. v. 1, "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." Whenever we are to go to God, we should consider where we are going, put off our shoes, for the place is holy. Were we thus frequently exercised, we would have more access to God in our ordinary approaches.

2. Let this commend Christ and the covenant to us, especially to those who stand off from him and his covenant. It is in the Mediator the sinner may meet with God in peace; for Jesus is our

peace, Eph. ii. 14. It is within the bond of the covenant, he is safe from avenging wrath. There is no safety without it, God will be a consuming fire to all who live and die out of Christ and the covenant.

Hearken, ye careless spectators, and be wise at length. Are you resolved to have no part in Christ and the covenant, that ye keep so far from the place of his feet, and the seal of his covenant. Consider, you also must come before God. You must die and come before the tribunal. Could you secure yourselves a place to be mere onlookers, when the rest of the world are dying about you; and when the world shall stand before the judgment-seat, then perhaps you might be allowed to be mere spectators on such an occasion as this. But it will not be so. You must take your part with the rest. And what will it be to get the first sight of your Judge then, with whom you might have been accepted, but would not? Consider, if it be a matter of such awful solemnity to approach the throne of grace, what will it be to stand before the throne of avenging justice? If it be so solemn to come up into mount Zion, where communion is to be had with God in Christ, what will it be to come to mount Sinai, where there is such blackness, darkness, and tempest, as will confound the adversaries of the Lord? Bless not yourselves that you have not gone up into the mount, for monuments of justice you shall be, if you be not thus monuments of grace.—Consider, what madness is it to lift up the heel against God, the weight of whose hand can crush you as a moth. Would it not be your wisdom to lie down among the dust of his feet, to approach him through his Son, and in the way of his covenant, trembling, if so be that he may be pleased to stretch out the golden sceptre, and save your life? Nay, come forward yet, strive to take hold of an offered Christ and covenant. Let not his terrors deter you from him. As the lepers at the gate of Samaria did, so reason ye.

3. Let us praise him for this, that upon us he has not laid his hand; that we have not left a name to the place, Perez, from the Lord's making a breach upon us; but that we may set up a pillar here, and call it Ebenezer. There has been strange fire offered to the Lord here this day; wrong touches given to the ark; unworthy communicating, faithless, fearless, stupid, confused, and hypocritical managements; who dare say they have made no stumble on the mount? The bread and wine in the sacrament have as deep relative holiness as the ark had; but had spectators and communicants been taken up as hot for their profane looking to the one, as the men of Bethshemesh were for their looking to the other, there had been a sad sight among us ere now. Glory be to our gracious God, that on us he hath not laid his hand.

4. Let us long for that day which will put an end to our sinfulness, weakness, and imperfection, when we shall see him as he is, without any danger of sinning or suffering, which is far better, Phil. i. 23. It would be a token for good that we had seen the Lord, if we were now longing for that blessed day.

*Lastly*, Let us apply ourselves to the duties which a gracious God calls for at our hands.—And,

1. Is there any among us who have been admitted to an holy familiarity with God? Song i. 4. Then,—Wonder at the freeness of grace, and be thankful that ever the like of you should have come so far forward; 2 Sam. vii. 18, "Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?"—Double your watch, and walk very softly, being careful to keep your nearness, Song iii. 5; Isa. xxxviii. 15.—If there be any special errand to the throne for yourselves, or for the church of God, as no doubt there is, strike in with this golden opportunity, and lay it before the Lord, Exod, xxiv. 8, 9.—Beware of being proud of your attainments. There is a hazard here; but when you see your peacock-feathers, remember they are borrowed, and look to your black feet, 2 Cor. xii. 7.—Lay your account with a storm, and be on your guard. If you have got a larger meal than others, it is not unlike you have more to do than they. But accept that kindly, and bless God who is beforehand with you, laying in the provision before he lays on the burden.

2. Is there any among us who have seen the God of Israel? Then walk as becomes those who have beheld his glory. Blessed are your eyes, for they see. But here some may say, Alas! this sight has been withheld from my eyes.—In answer to such, I observe, that some saying this, no doubt speak true; others belie the working of God's grace towards them. Therefore we must put it to the trial; for one may get a sight of Christ, and not know that it is he, John xx. 14; Luke xxiv. 16. I ask you, then, what effect on you has the sight which you have got this day?—Has this day's sight humbled you more, made you more vile and loathsome in your own eyes, filled you with shame and blushing, and self-loathing? It is a sign you have seen the Lord, Job xlii. 5, 6.—Has it weaned you more from the world, sunk the value of all created excellency with you, made you see through the bulky vanity of the world, that you are resolved you shall feed no more on these husks? Matth. xiii. 45, 46. Rev. xii. 1.—Has it made the body of sin and death heavier than it used to be?—May be some of you think, ye have been undone at this communion with an ill heart, that drew a vail between Christ and you; and now ye are crying, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man

that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" O to be quit of this burden at any rate! O to be beyond a sinning condition! welcome grim death, so that it would take off the burden. Truly, if it be so, it has been so thin a vail, that you have got a sight of Christ through it, Isa. vi. 5; Luke ii. 29, 30.—Has it kindled a superlative love in your own heart to this unseen Lord? Do ye love him more than all persons and things else? Psalm lxxiii. 25. If it be so, ye have seen him, Luke xxiv. 32. Sick of love, argues a blink of the face of the lovely one received. Therefore, bless God, and be thankful. It is bastard humility to belie the grace of God. Walk so as the world may take notice that you have seen what they never saw, and have been where their ungracious feet never carried them. And show this in personal and relative holiness, Acts iv. 13. Commend the way of God to others. Tell them it is good to be on the mount. Speak good of God's house, and give it your testimony, before despisers of Christ and ordinances; especially before poor discouraged sinners, those who desert ordinances, alleging God not to be found in them.—Finally, quench not the Spirit, cherish his motions, and follow on to know the Lord.

3. Ye who have made this solemn approach, but really have not seen the Lord, set ye about your proper duty.—Search out, mourn over the cause of this, and quickly flee to the blood of Christ for its removal. You have not seen the Lord; and is there not a cause? yes, sure he has a quarrel with you, and therefore has withdrawn himself. Seek it out. The fault has been either in your state, that you are yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. This is a fundamental mistake. Or it has been in your frame. Either you have not been at pains to prepare, or have sat down on your preparation; or some idol of jealousy has been nourished:—or it has been in your faithless management. Wonder ye in a special manner, that ye have come off safe, and that upon you the Lord has not laid his hand. Do not fret that you are come off with nothing; but, O bless him that you are come off at all!

*Lastly*, Go back to the throne with all speed. Though the communion-table be drawn here, it is not yet drawn to you in heaven; Joel iii. 21, "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed; for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." Follow on to know the Lord. Be not like the mixed multitude, who, disappointed of the milk and honey of Canaan, would needs go back to the onions and the garlic in Egypt. If you do so, his soul will abhor you: Heb. x. 38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Say not, I will never see the Lord now: for, wherefore has he spared you, but that you might have occasion to have your marred work amend-

ed? And if ye wait on long, wonder not, it is a mercy ye have access to wait on. Lay down the resolution in Lam. iii. 49, 50, "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven;" and in Isa. viii. 17, "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." Amen.

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## GOD NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED HIS PEOPLE'S GOD.*

## SERMON X.

HEB. xi. 16,

*Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

GOD has a peculiar people in the world, though these are few in number. Satan is called the god of this world; and indeed is so, in regard the greater part of the world, even the whole natives of the weary land, are his. But there is a select company, who are in, but not of the world; a people of a peculiar character, who are strangers and pilgrims in the earth; whose heads and hearts are towards the better country.—In the text we have their peculiar privilege, "God is not ashamed to be called their God." More is implied than is here said. God, who is the God of the whole earth, is their God in a peculiar manner, by a special covenant-relation; and he will own it before all the world, however they be despised by the world. They are savingly interested in him, and he is peculiarly interested in them. As they are not ashamed to be called his people, unless it be for this, that they do not look more like him; so he is not ashamed to be called their God. (*Greek*, to be sirnamed.)

There are two things which make men ashamed to own a relation; one upon the part of their relatives, another upon their own part. But neither are in this case.

1. He is not ashamed on their part, to be called their God. He is not ashamed of them, (as the Greek text bears expressly), as men sometimes are of their relations because of their scandalous character, as our Lord says he will be ashamed of some, so as that he will not own them, Mark viii. 38. The reason of this is intimated in the text, in the particle *wherefore*, which leads us back to the character of those who are indeed God's people, exemplified in Abra-

* Delivered October, 1722.

ham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, ver. 13—16. The sum of it lies here: That upon the faith of God's promise of a better world, they forsook this world, and went through it even to the grave, as persons not come to the place where they expected and desired to settle. Wherefore, since they forsook this world for God, and trusted him for a better inheritance to themselves, and, upon the faith of his promise, were easy in all their wanderings and hardships, God is not ashamed of them to be called their God: Exod. iii. 6, "I am," said he, "the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In these steps all the true children of Abraham walk.

2. He is not ashamed on his own part, to be called their God; as men are ashamed, when they have no suitable entertainment to give to those who have left all others for them, and depend entirely upon them. For he has prepared for them a city. These patriarchs dwelt in tents, and went from land to land at God's call; but a city, even the New Jerusalem, heaven itself, was prepared for them by their God; a city suitable to his dignity; a city, the like of which all the world could not have furnished them. He is not ashamed to be called his people's God, whatever hardships they suffer for his sake; for he has enough to make up their losses, ready for them. He would reckon it a stain on his honour, that any of them should be losers at his hand; if he should not fully answer the trust they put in him; if he did not give them as good, nay, better than the best thing which they ever were denied for his sake.—From this subject, we observe the following DOCTRINES, viz:—

DOCTRINE I. That however mean and low those be who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better, God is not ashamed of them, or on their part, to be called their God.

DOCT. II. That whatever hardships they may suffer for his sake, he is not ashamed on his part to be called their God, having prepared for them a heavenly city, which will make up for all their losses.—These we shall shortly illustrate in their order.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That however mean and low those be who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better, God is not ashamed of them, or on their part, to be called their God.

We shall here,

I. Explain the import of this their privilege.

II. Give the reasons of the point. And then,

III. Improve it.

We are then,

1. To explain the import of this their privilege.—It imports,

1. That he is their God, how mean soever their lot be. Whatever they want, they have him for their God: Heb. viii. 10, "And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The patriarchs had a wandering life of it in the world, were always pilgrims and strangers, they could never count themselves at home, while in the world. But whatever they wanted, they had a God in Christ for their own God. O! ye who are coming away from Lebanon, forsaking this world for God, breathing and panting for the better world, assure yourselves, he is your God, by this good token, that the heart of man will never in this case loose one foot till it has another fastened, never quit the present world till it be possessed of a God to fill up its room. It will never let go the grip the one hand has of this world, till it has a believing grip of a God in Christ with the other. Hence believing is compared to buying, where the man will not part with his money, till the commodity, which for the time is better to him than money, is made over to him. So, though you were reduced to this, that ye could not tell carnal Israel's tale, Hos. ii. 5, "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink:" yet ye may tell David's tale, a far better one: Psalm xviii. 2, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength, in whom I will trust: my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."—Here some may propose this

Question, But what can persons make of this in the want of earthly enjoyments? We answer, They may make all of it that is necessary to full satisfaction and contentment of heart, Hab. iii. 17, 18. Full protection, full provision, for time and eternity, there is nothing more can be needed: Psalm cxlii. 5, "I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living."—It imports,

2. That he takes such a pleasure in them, and puts such an honour on them, that though the world should cast out their name as evil, he sirnames himself by them, and brings their name into his. Hundreds of times, the expressions, "The Lord thy God," "The Lord your God," occur in scripture, applied to God with respect to his people. Yea, he bears up their name in his, when they are dead and gone out of the world, since they still live unto him: Matth. xvii. 32, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." This is a memorial of them that will last, when the monuments and marble tombs will not keep the memory of the wicked from rotting. —It imports,

3. That he allows them to call him their own God: John xx. 28, "And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord, and my God." They can say this, how little soever they have in the world which they can call theirs. Why should they not call him by his own name? The Lord their God is the name he has taken to himself; a plain indication of his being pleased to be called by this name.—It imports,

4. That he allows them to depend on him as their God, and to improve their relation to him for all which they need; whoever casts them off, or refuses to help them, God will never put off his people with names, without the things signified by these names. If he is called their God, he will own his name in effect and reality; and indeed be a God to them, to all the intents and purposes of the covenant: Gen. xvii. 7, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." They may look for all which they need from him, and are welcome to a fill of the fulness of God; whatever their case requires, this God will be all in all to them. Hence the expectation of faith; Psalm xxvii. 10, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."—It imports,

5. That he will own himself to be their God before the world, whoever disown them. He is content that strangers call him by this name, as Nebuchadnezzar did, Dan. iii. 29; and Darius, chap. vi. 16. He puts marks of his respect and relation to them upon them before the world, so that the world shall be obliged to take notice of his owning them. Rev. iii. 9, "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, (which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie); behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." If their corruptions will not suffer them to acknowledge so much, yet their consciences shall not get it refused. Hence David prays, Psalm lxxxvi. 17, "Shew me a token for good, that they which hate me may see and be ashamed, because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me." —It imports,

*Lastly*, That he reckons it his honour to be their God, even though men should be ashamed to rub shoulders with them. Accordingly we find him call them his glory: Isa. xlvi. 13, "And I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." And in 2 Cor. viii. 23, they are called the glory of Christ. He glories in his special interest in them, and takes a pleasure to come over it: Song viii. 12, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have

a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."

We are now,

II. To give the reasons of the point. Among other reasons, there are the following :—

1. Because they have embraced him in the covenant, for their all, in opposition to the world, and all that is therein ; which shows a nobleness of spirit in them, the certain product of his own Spirit: Psalm iv. 6, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in earth that I desire besides thee." There are two offers made to every one of us : God says, "I will be thy God," the world says, "I will be thy God." Most men fall in with the world's offer, and all men naturally incline this way. But these noble souls, as partakers of the divine nature, pour contempt on the clay idol, God's rival, refusing it; and honour him by believing and embracing his offer; so that when the Lord says in the gospel to the man, "I will be thy God," his soul echoes back again, "Then thou art mine, my God, my portion ; I take possession upon the credit of thine own offer :" Psalm cxlii. 5, "I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." Thus he is not ashamed to be called their God.

2. Because they quit the world's certainty for divine hope, and trust him for an unseen portion to themselves, as preferable to all that the world can afford, believing he will glorify his all-sufficiency and his faithfulness in the promise, laying all their weight upon them ; Rom. iv. 20, 21, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God ; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able to perform." Such a trust they have in God, else they would never forsake the world : for plain it is, according to the measure of the belief of a better world to one's self, so is their forsaking the present world. And since they thus honourably trust him for their all, he is not ashamed to be called their God.

3. Because they can take up with nothing less than a God for their portion, by which they discover a peculiar elevation of spirit, the effect of divine grace : Phil. iii. 8, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." They can no longer feed with the prodigal upon the husks of the empty creation. Their soul's cry is, "Give me a God in Christ, or else I die." All the world, nay, a thousand worlds, cannot fill up his room :

Song viii. 6, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death: jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." And so they press forward through temptations, and the greatest danger which the world can lay before them, to hold him as their portion, and to come to the full enjoyment of him. Song viii. 7, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." So he is not ashamed to be called their God, because they thus love and desire him.

4. Because, in their way and walk, they are of a character distinguished from the men of the world, Phil. iii. 18—21. They dare not take the way of the world, their souls hate it, as being opposite to the manners of the country to which they are going. Therefore they are nonconformists to the world, in so far as it is disconformed to the way of the Lord.

We shall now,

III. Improve this point.—Hence see,

1. That carnal worldlings are none of those whose God the Lord is, Matth. vi. 24. Those whose hearts are not loosed from the present evil world, are not brought within the bond of the covenant, and have no right before the Lord to the sacrament, which is the seal of it. He would be ashamed to be called their God, who make that clay idol their God. I offer two evidences of this disposition.—(1.) When it is the world, and not God himself, which has the chief room in men's hearts and affections; Matth. vi. 21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Consider what it is, whether God or the world, which your hearts do most desire, and are most set upon, Psalm iv. 6, (quoted above). What it is your chief joy lies in, in the enjoyment of God, or the enjoyment of the world. Whether your chief sorrow arises from crosses in the world, or from sin that offends God, or from the hidings of his face?—(2.) When the heart can never rest in God, but must still have its rest in the creature; or no rest for it at all: and so the man's life of comfort just depends on the smiles or frowns of the present world, not upon the having or wanting the favour of God, his smiles or frowns. Perhaps the man might find a rest betwixt God and the world, but no rest of the heart in God alone, Luke xiv. 26.—Hence see,

2. That such as having weighed all things, have forsaken the world for God, and fixed their desires on him and the better world, intent to be there whatever their lot in this world be; and to enjoy God in Christ as their God and portion, however small their portion be of this world's good things: they may be sure God is their

God, and he will own it, though, by reason of the weakness of their faith, they have much ado to plead it. They may come to the communion-table, and fully assure their hearts of it, by the seal of the covenant, which he has provided for this purpose, to shew that he is not ashamed to be called their God. It is the pilgrim's table.—Learn,

3. That God is worthy to be chosen for our God in covenant; and therefore I exhort you to make choice of him for your all, and give up with the world henceforth, that ye may be pilgrims and strangers in it.—To prevail with you as to this, consider,

(1.) He is content to take in outcasts: Psalm cxlvii. 2, "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; he gathereth the outcasts of Israel." Never do any seek after a God in Christ for their God in earnest, till such time as they see there is no satisfaction for them to be had in the creature. Thus they find they need a God. The gospel discovers God's offer to be their God, and grace determines them to choose him for their God. And they are not rejected, because they came not till their need drove them: but are welcome, since they came on the discovery of their need.

(2.) Consider, he is a fast friend, and forsakes not on any emergency whatever. If you take him for your God, and forsake the world, he will stand by you at all times, and own you, though all the world should forsake and disown you. O! have you not need of such a friend?

(3.) Does not the world reward your love with hatred in many instances? How often is your rest in it disturbed! O take God for your God this day, and you thus make the best exchange, of a changeable world for the unchangeable God.

*Lastly*, If you continue to forsake God for this world, the time will come when the world will fail you, and you will not have a God to own you, and so will be absolutely helpless. He offers himself to you in the covenant. Believe and embrace him this day. Give up with the world, and all things in it. Take him for all in time and through eternity, as an upmaking portion. We now go on to a short illustration of

Doctrine II. That whatever hardships his people may suffer for his sake, he is not ashamed on his part to be called their God, having prepared for them the heavenly city, which will make up all losses. We are not here to launch out into the consideration of heaven under a notion of a city; but only shall,

I. Show in what respects the heavenly city is prepared for the pilgrims who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better.

II. Lay before you the reasons of the point. And then,

III. Make some improvement.

We are then,

I. To show in what respects the heavenly city is prepared for the pilgrims who have forsaken this world for God, looking for a better. It is prepared.

1. In respect of eternal destination in the decree of election before the world was made; Matt. xxv. 34, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Their forsaking of the world in time, is an evidence and fruit of their election from eternity. Their being called out of, and separated from the world lying in wickedness, is owing to that eternal free-love, which in the decree separated them from the rest of the corrupt mass of mankind. The seal of God upon them from everlasting, though undiscernible till the day of their conversion, is the cause of their departing from the tents of wickedness; 2 Tim. ii. 19, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." It is prepared,

2. In respect of purchase, by the sufferings and death of Christ. It is therefore called the purchased possession, Eph. i. 13. And the price of the purchase is his blood, Acts xx. 28, "To feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Eternal happiness is the proper reward of Christ's works, not of ours. It had been in vain for any of the children of Adam to have looked for a better country than this world, had not the Lord Jesus, by his obedience and death, bought it for them. None of the pilgrims had ever got footing there, had it not become the land of our Immanuel by his own purchase. It is prepared,

3. In respect of possession taken of it already in their name, by our Lord Jesus entering into it, as a public person, at his ascension: Heb. vi. 20, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." As Christ died in their name, and so they died in him, the law having them all legally on the cross, when it had him there; therefore it is said, "They are crucified with Christ," Gal. ii. 20; so he rose again, and ascended into heaven, and took possession of it in their name. Thus they are actually and really, though not in their persons, but in the person of Christ, possessed of the city already: Eph. ii. 6, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This Christ himself told to be his

errand in going away: John xiv. 2, "I go," said he, "to prepare a place for you."—It is prepared,

4. In respect of readiness to receive them in their own persons. They are made habitually ready for it, in respect of their state of justification and sanctification: Col. i. 12, "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And it is ready for them, of which we have two evidences.

(1.) A new gate is erected, and opened for their entry into the city. It may be called the pilgrims' gate, to distinguish it from that of the natives of the city. See it, Heb. x. 19, 20, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." All the pilgrims enter by it, and it was erected purposely for them. And it is always open, never shut: Rev. xxi. 25, "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there."

(2.) The notice is already there before them, that they are coming. The King's son has carried it thither: John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." And this his efficacious intercession removes all lets or hindrances out of the way.

We are now,

II. To give the reasons of the point—I take them up in these four.

1. Because the happiness of the city, if they were once come there, will more than balance all the hardships in their pilgrimage that they had to undergo for his sake. Why should he be ashamed to be called their God, be their lot in the world as bad as it can be? The glory of the city will more than balance all the contempt, reproach, and disgrace cast on them for his sake. He will not be in their debt for lying among the pots on his account. The glory of the city will make them whiter than ever the world could make them black, Psalm lxviii. 13, "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold." The rest of the city will more than balance all that toil, pain, weary work, in doing or suffering which they had for God in the weary land. What though it cost them many a weary step ere they get thither? If they were there, it will all be forgotten. Then they will for ever rest from all their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. Abraham's bosom will make the weary body and languid spirit fresh for evermore. The riches of the city will

more than balance all their wants and losses in this world, even though they should lose their very lives in the cause. Whatever their wants are now, there is enough before them in the city above. And God has more, ten thousand times more to give them, than they can lose for him: Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." The eternity of the city, and all that is in it, will more than balance the continuance of their hardships in this world, to whatever length holy Providence sees meet to spin them out: 2 Cor. iv. 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." However dark and long their night be, that morning cometh which will never be succeeded by another night.

2. Because they are not far from the city: They will soon be there: Psalm xc. 10, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." They are within a hand-breadth of the city, Psalm xxxix. 5. It is but through the wilderness, over Jordan, and they are at it. And they cannot complain then, they are so near home, however harsh their entertainment be in the way.

3. Because in the meantime there is a communication betwixt them and this city, so that the whole of what they need may come from it. Pilgrims need never go to the world's door. They always may have provision from this city for their wilderness-journey. Though the Israelites could neither have provision and supply from Egypt, nor Canaan, while they were in the wilderness, they wanted not, they got it from heaven.

*Lastly*, Because the very faith and hope which they entertain as to this city, is sufficient to support them under all their hardships, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 18. Faith believing the word of promise, and hope waiting for its accomplishment, bring down heaven to them till they go up to it; Heb. ix. 1, "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Rom. viii. 24, "For we are saved by hope." Thus there is no reason he should be ashamed on his part to be called their God.

We now come,

III. To improve this point.—It serves,

*First*, To pour shame on the wisdom and way of the world. And this,

1. In that they reckon it wisdom not to quit a seen advantage for an unseen one, certainty (as they call it) for hope: Psal. iv. 6. "Who will shew us any good?" Therefore they embrace the pre-

sent world, tack about, and sail with every wind; making the way of the world, and their own ease, the mark by which to steer their compass, rather than the word and glory of God, and the dictates of conscience, according to the word. When they have done this, they reckon they have done wisely: Hosea xii. 7, 8. "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance." But either this is brutish folly, or God may be ashamed to be called the God of pilgrims in this world, who take quite another way, and look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, 2 Cor. iv. 18. But God is not ashamed of pilgrims, therefore the men of the world are fools; and they will be seen to be so with a witness; for God's promise is better than the world's hand-payment. It pours shame upon the wisdom of the world,

2. In that they are ready to be ashamed of God's people, because of the hardships they are laid under in their pilgrimage through the world. This their way is their folly; for whatever their lot be God is not their God and portion. The world's esteem is little worth, but heaven's esteem of the saints never alters, whatever alterations may be in their outward condition. This point,

*Secondly*, Serves to instruct in several duties, those who profess to be pilgrims in the world, and to have taken God for their God, looking for a better world. Such as,

1. Be not ashamed of him, to be called his people; Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Be not ashamed to own him, and avouch him to be your God. Whatever bears his image and the stamp of his authority, cleave to it confidently. Be not ashamed of any of his truths, ways, ordinances, whatever may be thought of them by the world, for worldly men are not the proper judges of these things, and cannot discern their real worth.

2. Be not ye a shame and dishonour to him, by your cleaving to the world, and the way of the world; Rom. ii. 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." Remember it is they who forsake the world, whom God is not ashamed to be called their God. If you go back again to your former lusts, you blot out your name out of that number, and rank yourselves among those who have their portion in this life. If he be your God, cast not dishonour on him, by hanging on about the door of the world, and your lusts, like them who have no other God to depend on. If you make as little conscience of your thoughts, your words, your

actions, and dealings with God or man, as the men of the world do, for all your profession, God will do with you as a man with burs which stick to his clothes, he plucks them off, and casts them into the fire.

3. Do not decline the hardest piece of the doing-work of religion for him. Engage in the whole without exception. Have respect to all his commandments, Psalm cxix. 6. The internal duties of religion must by all means be done by you, at the same time leave not the external undone. Mortification of your lusts, and watchings against them, in the faith of the promise, should be your daily work, and stick not at cutting off right hands, and plucking out right-eye sins. All this is but a very small thing in comparison of what he has prepared for you: Rom viii. 13, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

4. Shift not the cross of Christ, but be ready to suffer for him as he may call you; 2 Tim. ii. 12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us." No Christian sufferers for him shall ever be losers by him, lose what they will in the world. Narrow not your notion of suffering for Christ, to suffering of violence by persecutors. But remember, that though it may come to this, that you must either sin or have to suffer some hardships to keep your conscience clean, (and this you may meet with in the most peaceable times of the church); yet then the Lord calls you to suffer for him. And suffering hardships for your adherence to any duty of the ten commandments, out of love to God and his holy law, is as really suffering for Christ, as if you laid down your liberty or life in defence of the articles of your faith.

5. Walk like the expectants of heaven, citizens of the city above prepared for you by your God. This city will far more than compensate for your sufferings, for all the difficult and hard steps ye may have in your way thither.—Live by faith, and keep the promise in your eye;—the promise respecting the end of your journey, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which awaits you, 2 Cor. iv. 17;—the promise respecting your throughbearing by the way; 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Carry meekly and patiently under all the hardships of the weary land, like the followers of Christ. Men do not fret and vex themselves, because the midges flee about them, when they travel in a hot summer-day. Christians need be as little surprised that they meet with one rub after another in the way through this wilderness; and because they

may be of long continuance, Christians should arm themselves with patience in the faith of a better world; Col. iii. 15, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Be resolute to get through, and never to make truce with the world, come what will come, but press forward in the way of duty over all impediments, where the Lord points out your way; Matth. xi. 12. "And from the days of John the baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."—Carry cheerfully and courageously, as knowing better times are coming: Heb. x. 34. "For ye had compassion on me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourself that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

*Lastly*, Spend the time of your sojourning in making ready and preparing for that city which the Lord has prepared for his people; Rev. xix. 7, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." There was much cost and pains at preparing it for them; no wonder that pains be necessary in them to make ready for it. All the Lord's people are habitually, in respect of their state, prepared for heaven; but what they have to do is, to get themselves prepared actually, in respect of their frame; therefore labour to be dying daily to this world, and to get your hearts more and more weaned from it; that ye may be like ripe corn forsaking the ground.—Cherish quick and vigorous longings to be rid of the body of sin and death; maintain the battle against heart-corruptions constantly; and this will make you long for deliverance. Be watchful, as not knowing when your Lord cometh.—In a word, be much conversant in this city; solace yourselves with believing prospects of it; and see that your heart be there, for there unquestionably your heart must be where your treasure is, Col. iii. 1—5. Amen.

# A SERIES OF SERMONS,

INCLUDING THOSE PREACHED ON THE

# NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF CHRIST.

## THE BEST SECURITY AGAINST THE DAY OF WRATH.*

HEB. xi. 28,

*Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born, should touch them.*

SOLOMON tells us, Prov. xxii. 3, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished." We may be sure there is a sad and trying time abiding the world. God will have his day when the world has got theirs. Of this there is no great ground to doubt, that there is a sad and trying time abiding these nations. At the last occasion of this nature we had, the Lord seemed to be giving the word to cut up the cumber-ground fig-tree of the Church of Scotland; yet, beyond hope, he has let it alone another year. But let us take heed; there may be more depending on the effects of the digging and dunging this year than we are aware of. It has got deep, very deep snegs already, and the axe is still lying at the root. And therefore I think we have the duty of this day, this communion-day, in the text; and that is, that we make it a hiding day under the covert of blood, for time and for eternity; as Moses did in the like case.

God had long sat still, and his enemies had been provoking him; now he was risen up, and was begun to reckon with them; and, after several lesser strokes, the warning is given, that the root-stroke was at hand. What does Moses, with other believing Israelites, in this trying time?

1. He goes to his duty, in a sealing ordinance, and makes a covenant with God by sacrifice; he "kept the passover," &c. He saw that he and his Israelites deserved the stroke, as well as the Egyptians; that God would have a sacrifice off both their hands; that the destroying angel should either find blood on their houses, or shed blood in them. Then says Moses, Let the Egyptians do as they will, the Lamb shall be our sacrifice this night; we will sprinkle the blood on our houses. So he "kept the passover," (*Gr.* made);

* A sermon preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's supper, at Ettrick, June 7, 1713.

not that he gave a being to it, instituting it at the command of God, though that was true; but it is an Old Testament expression, 2 Chron. xxxv. 1, well rendered, "he kept," *i. e.* celebrated this holy ordinance, whereof we have an account, Exod. xii. The passover was a Lamb slain and eaten by the Israelites, a sacrament of the old covenant of grace. The apostle speaks of "the sprinkling of blood," as a distinct thing; for though it was the blood of the paschal lamb, yet it was not used in the after passovers, after they left Egypt. The lamb represented Christ; and "the sprinkling of the blood," the believing application of his.

2. He managed this duty rightly. He had need; for there was much depending on it. He did it believingly "through faith." I may not stand on the detail of the actings of Moses's faith in this matter. Only I will give an instance of it both these ways, ver. 1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The object of faith is twofold. (1.) Things that have a being, but fall not under our sense. So Moses's faith was to him "the evidence of things not seen;" *i. e.* the spiritual instrument whereby he discerned and applied that in the ordinance which his eye could not see. He saw Christ in it, and the grand contrivance of salvation: and by the same mean he applied him. What else could give ease to a guilty sinner whose eyes were opened? And therefore, notwithstanding of Pharaoh's rage against him, and that they were all to march the next day, and that there was to be such a dreadful stir in Egypt that night, he keeps his temper and goes about his duty. (2.) Things that have no being but in the promise. So his faith was to him "the substance of things hoped for;" *i. e.* the spiritual instrument whereby he assured himself, that the deliverance which was not yet done should certainly be performed; and so the future deliverance was to him thereby as present. And our faith must act both these ways, if we manage this sacrament aright.

3. He had a particular view in his managing of it; "lest he that destroyed the first-born, should touch them." He saw there was a bloody time at hand, that God was to make the most dreadful time in that land that ever they saw with their eyes. The destroying angel was to pass through the land of Egypt that night, to smite all the first-born, both man and beast. He was afraid of the least touch of that angel armed with vengeance, knowing it would crush him as a moth. Therefore he takes the blessed opportunity which the Lord had put into his hand, to secure himself and his people; flying in under the covert of blood, to be hid in the day of the Lord. He does not gather his people together to stand to their own defence; that would not do: they must go into their houses, and lie at the

feet of mercy. To close the windows, bar the doors, &c. will not do it; but the blood of the lamb on the door-posts will. Therefore he "sprinkes that blood" for that very end.

Doctrine. The believing management of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, is the best security for a sinner against the day of wrath.

In handling of this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is that believing management of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, which is the best security for a sinner against the day of wrath.

II. What security this will be against the day of wrath.

III. Confirm the doctrine.

IV. *Lastly*, Make application.

I. *First*, I shall shew, what is that believing management of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, which is the best security for a sinner against the day of wrath, We will be helped to a view of this, by considering the ordinance pointed at in the text.

1*st*, The Christian and communicant that would manage this ordinance so as he may be secured against the day of wrath, must have his bunch of hyssop ready; that is, he must have *faith*, by which alone that blood can be sprinkled on the soul. An unbeliever can never believingly manage this or any other ordinance; for there can be no acting without a principle. Faith is the hand that must receive the atonement, that transfers the guilt on the head of our great sacrifice, the feet whereby we flee into the city of refuge, and the hand that draws the cover from wrath over our heads, and signs the covenant of peace betwixt us and an angry God.

2*dly*, He must believe his own desert of wrath, that he himself deserves to fall amongst them that fall. Blood on the door-posts of the Israelites proclaimed them guilty, as well as blood on the houses of the Egyptians did them. He must sit down at this table under a sense of sin, and desert of wrath; acknowledging that he deserves rather to be led to the altar for a sacrifice for vengeance to feed on, than to sit down at the table to feed on this costly sacrifice. If ye be this day to be marked with the sign of salvation, ye will be sensible ye have hung the sign of destruction before your own doors; and while others, in the view of wrath on the land, are dealing all the causes of wrath about them, ye will smite on your breasts, saying, with the publican, (Luke xviii. 13), "God be merciful to me a sinner;" a self, a land, a church destroyer.

3*dly*, He must, with an eye of faith, discern the sacrifice, and the virtue of it, seeing that in the ordinance which a carnal eye cannot

discern; as Exod. xii. 26, 27, "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." The apostle tells us, how the spiritually blind bring wrath on themselves, instead of securing themselves against wrath, 1 Cor. xi. 29, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." And here faith will say two things:—

1. Faith will look in through the ordinance, and seeing Christ in it, will say, "There is a hiding-place from wrath," John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Eph. ii. 14, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." The believer will see the grand device of salvation in a crucified Redeemer: he will say, There is the Lamb that was slain to turn away the destroying angel; the "Lamb of God," that is, the Lamb which God himself hath provided, as he did the ram in the thicket; JEHOVAH-JIREH, (*i. e.* "God will provide"), said Abraham's faith long ago, Gen. xxii. 14.

2. Faith will look more narrowly yet, even through the hiding-place itself; and where the fearful unbeliever sees many faults, the believer will see none, but say, "He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. There is a bottom on which I may venture for time and eternity; there is a sufficient shelter, blow the storm from what airth it will. There will be safety there when the Lord in anger will rain snares on a generation of his wrath; it will be safe there when the waters of Jordan swell to the brim. In a word, he will believe, (1.) That Christ is the appointed refuge against wrath; and, (2.) That he is a safe refuge, and that there is no other.

4*thly*, He must dip his bunch of hyssop in the bason where the blood of the Lamb is. Christ is our paschal Lamb, 1 Cor. v. 7; the covenant is the bason wherein the blood of the Lamb is poured, Heb. xiii. 20: and the cup the New Testament. The believing communicant will lay hold on the covenant made by sacrifice, that he may be safe in the day of wrath, Psalm l. 3—5. God offers himself to the sinner in the covenant; now must the man say, "I am the Lord's. The marriage of the Lamb is come," the Bridegroom has given his consent already, and he exhibits himself in the sacrament: and the soul by faith presents itself, and they join hands

and hearts at once. The Judge of the earth appears in the quality of a Bridegroom; and so they take him and are safe.

5*thly*, He must sprinkle this blood, make an effusion of it; apply it by faith, and receive the atonement. He must not stand afar, and say, I dare not meddle with that blood, though others may; I dare not lay my foul fingers on it. He must not sit down at the table, and only bathe himself in tears; not daring to bathe himself in the blood of a Redeemer. Call that what ye will, God will call it *unbelief* with a witness; and ye will rise even as clean as ye would come out of mire, notwithstanding ye would pretend to throw yourselves into it for washing. Therefore ye must touch, take, and apply that holy thing: say, This blood is for me, my peace, my pardon, my sanctification, &c., and on it I venture my all for time and eternity. Heaven and earth are my witnesses also, that I embrace the offer, and that it is mine, and that I must be found under the covert of it in the day of wrath, Gal. ii. 20, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me."

6*thly*, He must sprinkle it on the lintel and side-posts, only not on the threshold. Look with an eye of faith on it as precious blood; and sprinkle it over your whole man, above you, on every side; only not under your feet. Despise it not; consider that awful word, Heb. x. 29, "Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" It is the blood of God; the price and ransom of precious souls, the foundation of all the precious promises. But wrath from heaven hangs over your head, and over the land: sprinkle it above you, over your heads; take that blood for your sconce, shelter, and defence. Satan will attack you on every side, and may be his hounds will be let loose on you; therefore sprinkle it on every side; and by all means on your weak side. Ye have weak heads, and weak sides; this blood is for all.

7*thly*, He must not sprinkle it only on the back of the door, but on the outside, the lintel and side-posts, that the angel may see it. The Lord is coming to call the land to a sad account, and to examine every one. On with your mark this day, on your foreheads. Antichrist's followers may take his either on their foreheads or their right hands, to serve a turn: but not so Christ's, Rev. xiv. 1, "And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads." Your precious faith within must shine forth in an open profession, 2 Cor. iv. 13, "We also

believe, and therefore speak." Ye must not think to quit your profession, come what will come; but list yourselves this day among Christ's witnesses in the world, in Scotland, willing to seal your testimony with blood: Rev. xii. 11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death."

1. The substance of Christ's testimony; and that is holiness. The world with one voice is telling a lie of God, That he is a God that delights in wickedness; that folk may be happy with him in heaven, and come there, some say, in the way of profanity, or morality, or formality. Ye must give your testimony against this; and for holiness; That God is holy, and that there is no coming nor likeness to him, but in holiness; and this by a strict and holy walk, over the belly of the example of the world and your own lusts. This was the substance of the saints' testimony from the time of the righteous Abel, Gen. iv. 7, to this day, Rev. iii. 4; and xiv. 4. This is the substance of our covenants, national and solemn league; and will be the substance of the testimony of the Lord's people to the end of time.

2. The necessary appendages of the testimony; and these are twofold.

(1.) The revealed truths of God made known to you. You must bear witness to these, whoever run them down: the truths of doctrine, Prov. xxiii. 23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." This land is under the bond of a covenant to the maintenance of the truth of doctrine: and till the Lord raise up the spirits of his people to renew the covenant together, ye must seal the covenant for that effect at the Lord's table. If ye quit the truth of doctrine known to you, ye quit the substance of the testimony; for it is "the doctrine which is according to godliness," 1 Tim. vi. 3. It is the channel in which the sanctification of sinners, the great end of divine revelation, does run, Gal. iii. 2, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

(2.) The instituted ordinances of God which ye have received. Ye must bear witness to these, though our beautiful house should be laid in rubbish, and men's ordinances and institutions set up in their room by law. We are under a covenant for the "pure ordinances," and against "men's ordinances." And ye must bear testimony to these divine ordinances: for so far as ye quit them, ye quit

the substance of the testimony; for they are the means appointed of God for the sanctification of an unholy world. When we come to heaven, we will strive with no body for Presbytery against Prelacy, for the simplicity of gospel-worship against idolatry and superstition; for then the end, holiness, is obtained, and we have no more need of the means. But we are not there yet: and therefore we must contend for these ordinances of God; we must not lay by our staff, ere we arrive at our journey's end: we must use, and contend for the means, till we have obtained the end. Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, may be pleasanter rivers than Jordan; but dipping in them will not cure us of our leprosy; for they want one thing Jordan has, a word of divine appointment. Prelacy and ceremonies make a greater figure in the eye than purity and simplicity: but they are not means of holiness; God never made them, and men cannot make them so. Accordingly we have found them cursed trees of men's planting, under whose shade piety went always to wreck, and profanity grew.

8*thly*, He must feed on the body and blood of Christ. Faith must taste, and feed, and relish the sweetness of Christ, and of every part of Christ; unite the soul with him, and so draw virtue, sap, and strength from him, to stand before the Lord; the tempter and an evil world without, and lusts within. And I am sure, if faith be in exercise, it will take up a crucified Christ, as fit for this, as the eating of a lamb was to strengthen for work or travel. And,

1. Ye must take and feed on a whole Christ; Christ in all his offices. As your prophet. A day of wrath is a dark day, wherein many mistake their way, stumble into by-paths, and fall into error. But, says the believing communicant, I renounce my own wisdom and wit; and take this Christ to be my guide; and he has promised to guide me even unto death. A day of wrath is a day of sad challenges, of revenging strokes of justice; but here is my priest, I shelter under his righteousness. Such a day is a day of fearful attacks from the devil, the world, and the flesh; but I take him to be my king, and rely on his promises.

2. Ye must eat with the bitter herbs of repentance and sorrow for sin. If faith be stirring in thy heart, it will make a hole in your heart, though like a rock otherwise, Zech. xii. 10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Thou wilt sorrow for thy own sins, and the sins of the land, that bring on wrath; for the

dishonour done to Christ by yourself and all ranks, Ezek. ix. 4, "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abomination that be done in the midst thereof." Hab. iii. 16, "When I heard, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness in my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble."

3. Ye must eat in a departing posture; turning your backs on the world and your lusts, and setting your face stedfastly to Immanuel's land. Ye must this day go to that table, joining yourselves to the Lord, resolute to "save yourselves from this untoward generation," Acts ii. 40; that if Christ mind to leave the land, ye will not stay behind, but go with him, and follow him whithersoever he goes. If ye can but have him present with you in the furnace of affliction, in exile, prison, or blood, ye are content. For this end ye must take hold of him never to part.

II. The *second* thing proposed, was, to shew what security this will be against the day of wrath.

1*st*, Thus ye will be secured from eternal wrath. When the great day of wrath comes, and all the enemies of God are before him in one body on the left hand, ye will be on the right. Ye will stand with Christ on the field, till ye see with him the backs of all his enemies, while they are driven with horrible roarings into the bottomless pit. And when they are closed up there under the load of everlasting wrath, ye shall get your "crowns on your heads, and palms in your hands," and help to make heaven ring eternally with your hallelujahs.

2*dly*, In a day of wrath upon the land; though the storm blow never so hard, ye shall have a manifold security. Though ye must not promise yourselves security from trouble, yet,

1. Ye shall be kept from mixing with the generation under God's wrath. Ye are to set up the partition-wall this day betwixt you and them; do it firmly, and assuredly in the heat of the wrath it shall stand. Build ye the partition-wall, and God will build the protection-wall, Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." There are two generations in the world, the righteous and the wicked; those who fear God, and those who fear him not; but they are separate parties, opposite to one another: and they shall never mix. I confess, the two parties at this day are too near one another in the Church of Scotland. They are like the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image, part of clay, and part of iron; yet "iron is not mixed with clay," Dan. ii. 41, 43, &c. And when God kindles his fire, it will make men

of like natures run together, and make the separation greater; and the one generation may be less bulky, but nothing less worth; and the other generation more bulky, but less worth.

2. "It may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," Zeph. ii. 3. May be God may hide you in heaven ere then, as he has been doing with many eminent ministers and Christians of late, "taking them away from the evil to come." Or he can hide you under heaven, for "the earth is the Lord's:" and though men allow you not a hole to hide your head in, he can give you a broad place, whether they will or not. Though it be a very open place, he can draw a curtain over you, where the sharpest-sighted enemy shall not see through. He has an invisible lock and key on every place, where the most resolute and quick-sighted searchers may not be able to open the door, and see who is therein.

3. Ye shall not be straitened for provision, though it be a scarce time, Psalm cxlii. 5, "I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." Though it may be hard to get a sermon without, ye shall have two preachers within. (1.) The bosom-preacher will be with you, that has his pulpit in the breast; that is a good conscience, one of the sweetest preachers that ever opened a mouth, that fills all his hearers with joy, 2 Cor. i. 12, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience," &c. (2.) The heart-preacher, that has his pulpit in the heavens; that is, Christ himself by his Holy Spirit, who is always a successful preacher, whose hearers are ever taught to profit: Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." He will be to you as a "little sanctuary." And these will carry you through till ye come to your journey's end.

4. Though the weight of common calamity should bruise you, yea, and crush you, "there shall no evil touch you," Job v. 19. (1.) No evil that is an only evil; mercy shall always be predominant in thy cup. (2.) The evil shall be taken out of the evils that come on thee. So that (ver. 22), "at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth." Thou shalt say as Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 55, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" "There shall be no more curse." God shoots poisoned arrows at his enemies, but none of these at his friends. The serpent shall be unstinged. May be thou wilt think, ere all be done, thou feelest a sting; but assure yourself it will be but a bee-sting, that goes only skin-deep, Matth. x. 28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," &c. (3.) The evils that may come on thee, shall be turned to good,

Rom. viii. 28, "And we know, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Every stone thrown at thee, shall turn a precious stone; and the most cross wind shall drive thee to thy harbour.

III. The *third* thing proposed, was, to confirm the doctrine. And here only two things may be noticed.

1*st*, He that thus manageth this ordinance, unites with Christ, the peace-maker; Christ is his; his security is in him, for Christ is in him, Gal. iv. 19, he cannot die. His blood is sprinkled on his people, and that marks them for the Lord. The Father has given all into his hand; and now though he be a lion to others, he is a lamb to them; and so he will not hurt them himself: a Lamb, a male of the first year, in his prime; not a bone broken, in his full strength, though sacrificed for them; therefore he is able to defend them, and will not let his enemies hurt them; slain and roasted with fire, therefore justice has no more to crave of them: without blemish, and therefore can cover all theirs.

2*dly*, He gets all this sealed under the broad seal of Heaven in this ordinance. Herein the covenant of peace between God and sinners is sealed in both hands; and all these, and much more, are promises and articles of the covenant. And what greater security can ye imagine in this world?

IV. *Fourthly*, I proceed to the application.

Use I. For information.

1*st*, The slighters of this ordinance, especially at such a time, are great fools, and despisers of their own mercy. Some remain in their gross ignorance, and have no such esteem of it, as to set them on to great knowledge. Some live in their profanity; and having no mind to be abridged of their sinful liberty, have slighted all these, and, it seems, will slight them to the last. Some, if the least demur be made about their admission, if but spoke to about amending what is a reproach to the gospel in their conversation, presently cast it off, and inquire no more about it. And some that formerly have sat down at that table, cast at that and other ordinances altogether. Well, sirs, I must tell you, ye are slighters of your own mercy; and the slight redounds to Christ himself, whose ordinance it is, and will lie heavy on your souls if ever your eyes be opened. The day of wrath will either rouse and bow, or break your careless, proud, and presumptuous spirits. Those things may serve to blind your consciences now, that will fall off like fig-leaf covers, when God comes to call you to an account for your opportunities of grace.

2*dly*, The mismanagers of this ordinance are great fools, who sit

down at the Lord's table, but communicate not believingly. They do the outward work, but it is not in faith; they bring no faith, no sense, no discerning, &c.; and so instead of securing themselves against the day of wrath, do mark themselves out for wrath. Ah! miserable work, for men to turn the food of their souls into poison; so to manage the treaty of peace with God, that they part greater enemies than before! The sin of mock-covenanting, and unworthy communicating, will be a dreadful item in the day of wrath here and hereafter.

Use II. Of exhortation.

1*st*, Ye that are not communicants, ye are in hazard of the day of wrath as well as others, though ye sit not at the table. Will ye by faith embrace the sacrifice exhibited there; receive and sprinkle the blood, the covenant sealed there.

2*dly*, Communicants, manage this work so as ye may be secured against the day of wrath. All of you, flee into Christ Jesus as the city of refuge; and make sure work, and lay down your measures for time and for eternity.

Motive 1. Consider that there will certainly be a great day of wrath upon the world. "Our God will come." The day is coming when the dead shall be raised, and all shall be sisted before the tribunal. Eternal wrath will then sweep away all that shall be found out of Christ at that day. Where will ye then appear, O slighters and despisers of Christ?

Mot. 2. We have all imaginable grounds to look for a day of wrath against this church and these lands. The plague is begun already as to this poor church; her beauty is defaced; we have all left God, and he has left us in great measure: we have broken off from God, and are broken among ourselves. There is much of the carved work of Zion broken down already: and we have all ground to expect a root-stroke to the whole of the covenanted work of reformation. Matters are brought to that pass, that our lands can hardly miss to be a field of blood. The sins of the late times are like the iniquity of Baalpeor, which kindled the anger of the Lord against the congregation of Israel, and brought on a plague among them; and the iniquity of these times has not been suitably mourned over to this day. A spirit of apostasy and declining is on the growing hand amongst all ranks; the cry of our sins is gone up to heaven: and, notwithstanding all the alarming dispensations of the day, there is a visible hardness and stupidity on the generation, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, that we cannot see how we can escape. Prepare then to meet your God; and how will ye do it but in Christ?

I would only say two things.—

(1.) Seeing the glorious gospel-light has so shined among us, and that contempt of it and of religion does so appear in the sight of the sun, and a profane spirit does so much rage, it is very like God will have a particular eye for evil on the profane contemners of religion amongst us.

(2.) Seeing there is some ground to think that we shall yet have glorious days, it is like God will shovel out of the way many, that their eyes shall never see it; and that it will make a sad scattering among formal professors, strangers to the life of godliness.

Mot. 3. Consider Christ is now offering himself and the covenant of peace to us. It is time to be going when the Lord is risen up, and is drawing out his armies against us; to tremble when the lion roars. Come then, lest ye "mourn at the last, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me?"

I close with two or three words of advice to those that resolve so to manage this sacrament, as that they may be secured against the day of wrath.

(1.) Let not the thoughts of wrath prevail to darken your view of the love of Christ in the gospel and in this ordinance. Particularly assure yourselves if ye be willing to be the Lord's, and take him for your God, the white side of the cloud is to you; and that though God were to destroy the whole land from off the face of the earth, if there were but one soul who would take shelter in the covenant of peace, he should be welcome.

(2.) As ye give yourselves to the Lord, so give your families too. Take all yours that way, and lay them over on him, and leave them with him for the evil day.

(3.) Let it be your main concern to get strength to be carried cleanly through; that ye be not led away with the sins and snares of the evil time, and so fall from your stedfastness.

(4.) *lastly*, Be not peremptory and particular as to what otherwise may be your portion of common calamity; but leave that on the Lord. Only in this be particular, that the sting of the curse must be taken away, and therefore that ye must put yourselves in the bottom of the everlasting covenant, and give yourselves to Christ as the great Steersman through the sea of this world, leaving that to him what weather ye shall meet with in your voyage to Immanuel's land.

Thus I have delivered my message to you from the Lord, as that which I judged is God's mind and call to you at this day. I desire to venture myself for time and eternity on this bottom; and it is my

request to you, that ye will take this method this day for your security against the day of wrath. And if I should never have another occasion of this nature to speak unto you, I would leave it with you, That this, and this only, is the way to be secured against the day of wrath.

## THE SIN OF PEOPLE'S FORSAKING GOD AND BETAKING THEMSELVES TO THE CREATURE IN HIS STEAD.*

JER. ii. 13,

*For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

THIS text is ushered in with a strange preface, wherein the heavens are called to stand amazed, to be filled with horror, and to dry up. Why, what is the matter? the sin and folly of Israel. "My people have committed two evils," &c. In which words there is,

*First*, A general charge against them: they have done "two evils," two ill things. Why, two is not many; yea, but they are two leading ill things, two mother evils. They are two fountain-sins, each of them casting out their thousands, as a fountain doth her waters. They are enough to overwhelm them with sins and sorrows. And the evils are the greater, that they are "my people," in covenant with me, that have done them. It is not the isles of Chittim, nor Kedar; but Israel.

*Secondly*, A particular condescension on these evils, these fountain-evils.

1*st*, Deserting of God: "They have forsaken me," left me, and gone away from me. I am their King and Lord, and they have shaken off their subjection to me; their Head and Husband, and they have run away from me. I am their confederate, who took them into covenant with me; and they have broken the bands, and burst the yoke. I am their God in covenant, whom they have forsaken.

2*dly*, Taking up with the creature. They have betaken themselves to the creature in my room and stead. They have "hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (*Heb.* for to cut out, &c.) Thus they have made an exchange. They have

* Several sermons, preached at Ettrick in the year 1725.

left me, to go to them; like traiterous subjects, casting off their rightful lord, for an usurper; an unfaithful wife, deserting her husband, for her adulterer; a wretched creature, deserting his God, for an idol. So here,

1. There is something supposed. It is supposed,

(1.) That Israel was no more self-sufficient than any other people under heaven. They were not able to satisfy themselves from themselves; they were as much in need of supply for the satisfaction and rest of their hearts, as ever a thirsty man was of drink to refresh him. And as proud as they were, they behoved to hang on about some door or other for their supply; either God's or the creature's.

(2.) That, in this their necessitous case, God took them home to his house, as one would take in a beggar in rags, and set him down with the children: and told them, they should not want, if they would stay with him, Deut. xxxii. 10, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." He called them his people, took them into the covenant, and set them down at the fountain-head, the well-spring of mercy and goodness.

2. There is something expressly declared. It is so declared,

(1.) That Israel had made a wilful exchange of his condition, cast himself out of God's house, into the devil's common again; "changed his glory, for that which will not profit;" forsaken the God that took him in, and gone back to the empty creature, where he was before.

(2.) That Israel had sinned and played the fool egregiously in making this exchange. And accordingly his sin and folly is here proclaimed. And,

1. Israel was a holy people; but the text proclaims them a sinful people with a witness. Their forsaking him "the fountain of living waters," and betaking themselves to "broken cisterns," are signal evils. There is a heap of evil in each of them. They could not have made a worse choice, to the dishonour of God, and to make his name to be blasphemed among the heathen. So they affronted their God.

2. Israel was a wise people; but the text proclaims them fools with a witness; that were as blind to their own interest, as they were unfaithful to God's honour. Men's wisdom or folly appears in their bargains: let us see what a blind exchange they had made. They had exchanged,

1*st*, A spring-well, for cisterns. A cistern is a hollow place cut out in the earth, in wood, or stone, for receiving and keeping rain water, or water otherwise put into it; whereas the fountain or

spring hath the water from itself. God in Christ is the fountain, all-sufficient in himself. All the creatures are but cisterns; if there is no water brought into them from heaven, or from the spring, they are dry. Who then would exchange a fountain living and springing, for a cistern?

2*dly*, A fountain made ready to their hand, for cisterns that were to be hewed out. Happiness is ready in God for us, and we need only to draw out by faith the waters of consolation. But O what hard work is it to hew out the cisterns of created enjoyment! It is desirable to have comfort ready. Who then will be so foolish, as to exchange a fountain made ready to their hand, for cisterns that require much labour to hew them out?

3*dly*, One spring-well, sufficient for all their needs, for many cisterns. There is no one cistern that will do one's business; when the man has hewed out one cistern, the water is lacking and unpleasant there, and he must hew out another, and so on. And thus the soul once forsaking God, becomes restless; there is no end of cisterns. It is a great conveniency, to have what we need in one place, and not to be obliged to go here and there for it. Who then would forsake God, the fountain of all blessings, and betake themselves to the creatures, which though tried one after another, cannot supply their wants?

4*thly*, Fresh and sweet waters of the spring, for the dead unsavoury waters of the cistern, *i. e.* springing waters, bubbling up through the earth, cool, and fresh, for the standing, stinking waters of the cisterns. Who then will be so foolish, as to forsake the living waters, and betake themselves to the stinking waters of the cisterns?

*Lastly*, A spring-well, for broken and cracked cisterns, that let the water through them, and cannot hold it in. So that when the man comes to drink at his cistern, for his thirst; behold there was a crack in the cistern, and the water is all gone; and there is nothing left but sediment, mud, and mire.

The scope and substance of these words may be taken up in these two doctrines:—

Doctrine I. Forsaking of God in Christ, and betaking one's self to the creature in his stead, are two ill, signally ill things.

Doct. II. To forsake God in Christ, and take the creature in his stead, is a wretched exchange.

I return to the first of these, viz:—

Doct. I. Forsaking of God in Christ, and betaking one's self to the creature in his stead, are two ill, signally ill things.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall consider the two branches of it separately, viz:—1. The forsaking of God in Christ; and, 2. The betaking one's self to the creature in God's stead.

*First*, As to the *first* of these ill things, the forsaking of God in Christ, we shall consider,

1*st*, The object forsaken.

2*dly*, How sinners forsake God in Christ.

3*dly*, Why they forsake him.

4*thly*, The ill of this practice.

*Lastly*, Make application.

I. *First*, We shall consider the object forsaken. It is not simply God, but God in Christ: for the object in the text is "the fountain of living waters" to sinners, to refresh them, and satisfy their souls: but God out of Christ, an absolute God, is a consuming fire to them. We can no way, according to the scripture, conceive of God, as "a fountain of living waters" to us, but in Christ Jesus, Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness." John iv. 10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." It is true, there is an infinite fulness of goodness, mercy, and grace, in the nature of God; but to sinners it would have been a sealed fountain for ever, had not the Mediator interposed. So there is,

1*st*, A forsaking of God simply as God. Thus Adam, falling from his integrity, forsook God, shaking off the yoke of obedience to his Creator. This was a horrid evil, and it lies on all men in their natural state. They are in a state of desertion, having left God, Eph. ii. 12, "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." The first covenant tie is no longer able to hold them with him. In this sense, the Pagans have forsaken God, who never heard of Christ.

2*dly*, A forsaking of God in Christ. And thus only his visible church and people called by his name, are capable of forsaking him; as the text hints. He becomes their God in a visible church state, bidding them welcome to all his fulness, for the supply of their needs and making over the same to them in the gospel offer: they professing their acceptance, by receiving the seal or seals of his covenant.

So the God forsaken by the hearers of the gospel, must be considered,

1. As God in our nature, for communion with guilty us, Matth. i.

23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted is, God with us." We could have no communion with an absolute God: the rays of his Majesty would have burnt us up, as fire does the dry stubble. But he clothed himself with our nature, that he might be a refreshing spring to us, 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," &c. The rock of ages was found in our wilderness, and there he was smitten with Moses' rod, and the waters gushed out, the living waters, for us. He tabernacled among us.

2. As God in our nature, ready to communicate his fulness to us, for making us happy in time and eternity, John iv. 10, forecited. The spring is not to dig now; it is digged already, and running, that "whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. The invitation is given out, to come and drink, John vii. 37. All the saints have drunk, but the spring is running as much as ever for us.

3. *Lastly*, As a God we have professed to betake ourselves to for our happiness, Jer. xvi. 19, "O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." We have found the scorching thirst that hath seized us, through the disorder brought into our souls by Adam's fall; and have professed to look for our relief in God only; and so have sit down by the well.

II. The second thing on this head is, How sinners forsake God in Christ? Sinners forsake him,

Step 1. Lowering their esteem of him, the value and honour they had for him sinking low, Psal. l. 21, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." It is the high esteem of Christ that brings sinners to him; and as that sinks, they will go away, John vi. 68, "Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." The mystery of Christ is ready to be despised by proud nature, because there is no seeing of the glory of it without a peculiar light. Hence God in Christ is a stumbling stone to the blind world, Matth. xi. 6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." And a stroke in the eye, whereby one sees no beauty in him, leads here.

Step 2. The heart's falling off its rest in him, and turning restless, so that the fulness of a God cannot quiet it, Isa. xxx. 15, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." If the wife begin to harbour a discontent as to her husband, she is in a fair way to forsake him; and the

heart that cannot be content with the fountain, will forsake it, to hew out cisterns for itself; when the view of the broad covenant, with all its benefits, is not sufficient to lay bands on the heart, and make it to say, "This is all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, it is as good as gone from the Lord.

Step 3. Ceasing to cleave to him by faith, and letting go believing gripes of the promise, Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." It is by faith one depends on and hangs about him for happiness and satisfaction. It is the hand by which his children hold him, Cant. iii. 4. It is the eye which they are to keep on him for the supply of all their wants, Isa. xlv. 22. While they do so, they are safe; and the fountain will spring forth to them; as in the case of Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 26, when he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" and in the case of the Syrophenician woman, Mark vii. 24—30. But as soon as they let down their hands, and keep their eyes no more upon him for their supply, they are forsaking him. In the next place, they will be found,

Step 4. Looking out some other way, for something to rest their hearts in. And then they are on their way away from him, Heb. iii. 12. Unbelief says, One may long wait at this fountain, ere he get wherewith to quench his thirst; then he begins to think of hewing out cisterns. It says the promises of a rest are but fair words, not to be trusted to; then they are for turning back to Egypt again and think they must seek a seen good, Psalm iv. 6, "There be many that say, who will shew us any good?" Thus the restless heart, giving over to seek its rest and satisfaction in God, goes to the creature to find in it what it cannot find in God.

Step 5. Growing remiss in duties, and slighting opportunities of communion with God; a form of duties may be kept up, but the heart is away, what avail they? Cant. iii. 1, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not." Prayer is posted over; for it is for fashion's cause, rather than from faith or hope of gaining thereby, that they seek him at all: and by their coldrifeness in their addresses, they court a denial. At sermons, they are not all there, their heart is away after some one idol of jealousy or other, like those spoken of, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Satan strikes in, picks up the word as it is sown, and fills their hearts otherwise, Prov. v. 14, "I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly."

And Sabbaths become a burden, like those who said, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" Amos viii. 5.

Step 6. Having no regard to please him in their ordinary walk, Ezek. xxiii. 35, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms." Hence they are in no concern to acknowledge God in their ways, to seek counsel of God in particular cases, and to carry along with them a regard to his glory in all things; but are like the princes of Israel, Josh. ix. 14, that "took of the Gibeonites, victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." So, if they do a good thing, it is not because it pleases God, but because it pleaseth themselves; and if they do evil, and are touched for it, it is not because it is displeasing to him.

Step 7. Laying aside the word for a rule, and regulating themselves by another standard, Psalm cxix. 53, "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law." Satan shuffles in the course of the world, the voice of the multitude, instead of the Bible into their hand; and it is enough for them that they see a throng in the way before them, though they hear not the voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left," Isa. xxx. 21. But God speaks to us by his word, and binds us to it, Isa. viii. 20, "To the law and to the testimony," &c; and it is the appointed means of communion betwixt God and us; the rule of our obedience, and must be the reason of it; and it is the appointed channel of influences, Isa. lix. 21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." So whoso forsake the word, forsake God.

Step 8. Forsaking his people for their companions, Prov. xiii. 20, "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Like as it is with the sinner returning unto God, he turns his back on the world lying in wickedness, and forsakes his former companions in sin, Psalm xlv. 10, for there is no going in the way of life otherwise, Prov. ix. 6; so men forsaking the Lord, are ready to forsake his people too. Indeed men may keep by God's people, and yet forsake God; but none can forsake the people of God, and not forsake God himself; more than they can throw off a living body, and yet hold by the head.

Step 9. Forsaking ordinances, and the communion of saints there-

in. Ordinances are the trysting-places for the meeting betwixt God and sinners; he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks: he will account himself forsaken by people's turning their back on the trysting-place where he is to be met with. Mark Heb. x. 25, 26, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another. for if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." He hath sent out his messengers with an awful certification, Luke x. 16, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Therefore says Jeremiah, chap. xvii. 13, "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me, shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters." It is an ill sign in a wife, when she is not to be found in the house of her husband; and of one forsaking God, when his feet are giving up treading his courts.

Step 10, *lastly*, Throwing away the form of religion, casting off the mask, and giving the swing to their lusts. Thus the forsaking of God is completed, 2 Pet. ii. 22, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Then the devil re-enters with seven worse than himself, into where he had gone out. Thus men come to the end of this wretched rout. Yet even in this case all are not alike. Some give up themselves but to some one abomination or other; others give up themselves to all manner of abominations that come in their way, swimming in a sea of wickedness, as the former in a pool. Some again continue indifferent as to others yet in the way of God: others are possessed with a rancour and spite against the way of God, and those that follow it; so in times of peace, they are cruel mockers, and will do any ill turn they can; and in time of the church's trouble, will turn down-right persecutors.

III. The *third* thing is, Why they forsake him? how it comes they do so?

1. There is a natural bent to apostacy in all men; saints and sinners, Hos. xi. 7, "And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." In saints it stirs, and often carries them very fearful lengths, as it did in Peter; in sinners it reigns, and so may carry them the full length. This woful set of heart is natural to us, Gen. viii. 21, —"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Our hearts, by Adam's fall, have got a bias to departing from God: there is need to take heed to it.

2. Many were never truly joined to the Lord, though they seemed to be so: so having never knit with him, no wonder they fall away from him; 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us." Professors, strangers to saving faith, in whom dwells not the Spirit of God, but of the world, lie fair to make apostates; Heb. x. 39, "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." An error in the first taking up of religion, often makes it come to a sorry and shameful account at the long-run; men building without a foundation, Luke xiv. 28—30.

3. They often have some idol of jealousy secretly reserved, when they are at their best; and that upon a proper occasion does the business; like the young man in the gospel, that went away from Christ grieved, because "he had great possessions," Mark x. 22. It was not without reason that Pharaoh would have Israel leave their cattle: for then he knew this would bring them back again. One son of a stranger was the death of Gideon's seventy sons. One lust unmortified, and secretly spared, will be the death of a thousand good motions and inclinations. That proves the man's snare. So Judas' covetousness was sometimes peeping out, while he was following Christ; at last it broke out like a flood, and carried him quite away to betray his Master.

4. Their not pressing in to the sweet of religion, in an experimental feeling of the power of it. It is not for nought that exhortation is given with so much earnestness; Psalm xxxiv. 8, "O taste, and see that the Lord is good!" Experience is the best way to keep a sinner with God; he feels how good it is "to draw near to God," Psalm lxxiii. 28. Disappointment causes forsaking, as in the case of Israel in the wilderness. And they who press not in to the inner court of religion by faith, hope, and diligence, but satisfy themselves with the form of it, cannot miss these fatal disappointments.

5. The want of a living principle of grace in the heart, that may bear out in all changes of one's condition; Psalm lxxviii. 37, "For their heart was not right with him." It fares with sinners as with springs and pools; when there is a shower from the clouds, the pools are full; but then when drought comes, the pool drys up, there being no spring in it. But the spring-well bears out then as at other times. The newness of religion serves people a while, to keep the affections astir; but when that is over, and there is no living principle of grace, the affections are lost, and religion

turns unsavoury. They cool like a stone taken from the fire, and wither like a branch that takes not with the stock.

6. Unwatchfulness. Thereby men are stolen off their feet, Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life." Considering that we have a deceitful heart within, an ensnaring world without, and a busy devil going about us, no man can keep his feet without watching. By unwatchfulness there is a breach made in one's case, the conscience is defiled, and the heart is deadened; Eccl. x. 18, "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through;" and no care being taken to make up the gap, it grows still wider and wider: a strangeness gets in betwixt God and the soul; and that not being removed, they even wear out of acquaintance.

7. A conceit of being able to live without him; Jer. ii. 31, "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?"

8. *Lastly*, Ill company carries many away from God; 1 Cor. xv. 33, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Joash kept the way of God as long as his good tutor Jehoiada lived; but when he was gone, and fell into the ill company of the princes, he went quite wrong, 2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18. Many an apostate has ensnaring company made; and therefore we find God's people resolute to cleave to the Lord, will beware of it, as of a pest-house; Psalm cxix. 115, "Depart from me, ye evil-doors; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

IV. The *fourth* thing here is, The ill, the ill of sin that is in forsaking God in Christ.

1. It is a downright perversion and deserting of the end of our creation. As God is the first cause of all things, so he is the chief and last end, whereunto all ought to have a tendency, Rom. xi. 36, "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things." When God made man, he gave him a disposition to bend towards him in all things, as his chief end; when he re-made the world in Christ, he set sinners on the same way again, Psalm cv. 4, "Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek his face evermore." To forsake him, then, is quite contrary to our chief and last end. And for a man to forsake God, is as much opposite to the order established in things at the creation, as if the sun should leave his giving light, and the earth its yielding its fruit to men; as if the fire should go downward and the waters run upwards, and the whole course of nature should be turned upside down.

2. There is in it a setting up another in the room of God; therefore it is the first command, "Thou shalt have no other God." For what is the forsaking of God, but going away from him to another? there is no mids: for seeking ourselves instead of God, is a deifying of self. So the scripture points it out as spiritual adultery, Ezek. xvi. 32; and idolatry, Phil. iii. 19. See it then as a pulling down of our sovereign Lord God from his throne over us, and setting up a creature in his room, to pay it that homage which we owe to him alone.

3. Fearful ingratitude for the greatest mercy and kindness, Jer. ii. 2, 12, "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness; in a land that is not sown. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord." God has condescended to vail himself with our flesh, that he might keep communion with us, with the safety of his honour; "God was in Christ," that he might be a refreshing fountain to a starving world; he has brought us to him by the gospel, to drink of the waters of his consolations, while many of the world have the fountain sealed to them. What monstrous ingratitude must it be for us to forsake him! Jer. ii. 31, forecited.

4. Notorious unfaithfulness to our kindest Head and Husband; Jer. ii. 20, "For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands, and thou saidst, I will not transgress: when upon every high hill, and under every green tree, thou wanderest, playing the harlot." We cannot forsake him, but we must be false to our profession, our solemn vows and engagements. Our forsaking of him is treachery with a witness, casting off the strongest bands taken on us with our own consent, to abide with him and cleave to him. It is an aggravation that is not in the devil's deserting him, nor the Pagans.

5. Notorious unfaithfulness to our own interest, and folly with a witness. It was a pertinent answer which Peter gave; John vi. 68, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." It were good for sinners under temptation to forsake God, to propose it to themselves, and stay till they get a satisfying answer. Will men forsake one they are with, if they cannot do better, or as well with another? But we can never do as well with any other, 1 Sam. xii. 21, "Turn ye not aside from following the Lord: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." Nay, whatsoever we go to, from God, will do us hurt, and not good, Ezek. xxix. 7. It is taking poison, leaving wholesome food. So those forsaking God sin against themselves, cutting the throat of their own interest, Prov. viii. 36, "But he that

sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death."

6. An affronting of God before the world, casting dishonour on him, bearing false witness against him; Jer. ii. 31, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?" That bears the language of their deserting to have been, that God had been to them as a wilderness. Those forsaking God are as the spies that brought up an ill report on the good land; Rom. ii. 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you." What must the world say, seeing God's people forsake him, but that it is in vain to serve him, and that there is not that satisfaction and comfort to be found in him that the Word says there is?

7. A practical commendation of the way of the world, contemning God, and seeking their happiness in things that are seen; Prov. xxviii. 4, "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked: but such as keep the law, contend with them." Deserters of God do not only cease to give a testimony against the world lying in wickedness, but give testimony for them, as if "they only were the people, and wisdom would die with them." And thus they fly in the face of the testimony of God in the world.

8. It is a sinning against the remedy of sin, and makes one's case very hopeless; Heb. x. 26, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." When man forsook God as God and his God in the first covenant, there was a way found for bringing him back to God; 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" but if men shall forsake God in Christ, there is not another way to be expected for salvation. If the sinner fall at the Mediator's door, he must lie there, there is none to take him up. This is the last method of salvation; those who spurn it cannot escape perishing.

9. *Lastly*, It is an opened sluice for all other sins. So the text holds it out as a mother-sin. The man that forsakes God, he exposes himself a prey to all temptations, to be picked up by the first finder, Prov. xxvii. 8, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest; so is a man that wandereth from his place." He breaks off from communion with God in sanctifying, guiding, and strengthening influences; his soul being rendered as a pipe laid short of the fountain. He casts off his guide and protector in the wilderness; and no wonder to find him in all evil, who forsakes the fountain and only spring of goodness.

Use I. Then, let us be deeply humbled in the sense of our depart-

ures from the Lord, which we have had at any time in our life; Jer. ii. 19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts." How often have our hearts been found in this way, gadding after other lovers? Behold the wickedness, ingratitude, and unfaithfulness in it. What great lengths have we gone in affronting our God before the world, and causing his name to be blasphemed? Matth. xviii. 7, "Wo unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh." It may be humbling to us,

1*st*, That we live in a land infamous for apostasies; a covenanted land solemnly married to God, but which in a national capacity did forsake her covenanted God, pursuing even to death such as durst not go into the national apostasy. It is like, when God shall raise the process against the land for these things, it will be terrible, especially to those that are still forsaking him.

2*dly*, We live in a generation that is fast apostatizing, not going, but running away from God. The sluice of untenderness is opened among all ranks, wickedness abounds; the current is so forcible, that it is taking away many, one after another, with it, stripping them of their form of godliness; driving them into sinful courses that once a day would have said, "Am I a dog that I should do such things?" And it is hard for any to keep their feet.

Let us be humbled under our own and the generation's forsaking of God, considering the dishonour to God thereby, and the danger to ourselves.

2. Beware of and watch against the beginnings of forsaking of God. We may apply that, Prov. xvii. 14, "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with." When the soul begins to decline from God, it is hard to say where it may stop; but one step still makes way for another. I doubt not there are many, who, when they first left God, going out of his way, they did not think to have been so long away from him as they have been; nor to have gone so far as they have gone. And it would have been a terror to them then, to have thought that they should run the length they are now at. But it is easier holding off the first step, than off the second, and so forward; for men are like those going down a precipice, that cannot stop till they be at the bottom. Therefore watch against the beginnings, and "let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."

3. Ye that are far on, stop, and go no further; 1 Pet. iv. 3, "For

the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," &c. Hold in time, lest ye run to the utmost, and lie at the end of it a sacrifice to your own wilfulness. God is calling you to return, and promising to take you home again; Jer. iii. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Are not your consciences convinced, that it was better with you before ye went away than it is now? say then as Hos. ii. 7, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." Proceed not then in your course, to make ill worse. Why will ye rush on "as the horse rusheth into the battle?" Jer. viii. 6.

4. *Lastly*, You forsakers of God, return, return; whatever length ye are gone, whatever step ye are in, return to God in Christ.

1*st*, Return by faith, and let the marriage-covenant betwixt Christ and you be renewed. There is access to it yet; Jer. iii. 1, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Many a time matters are gone such a length betwixt Christ and sinners solemnly espoused to him, that there must be as great a solemnity to the agreement and coming home again, as there was to the first taking them in; Rev. xix. 7, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

2*dly*, Return by repentance; Jer. xxxi. 19, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Return with the blush in your face, the tear in your eye, grief and sorrow in your heart, your hand smiting on your breast, and the rope of humiliation about your neck, for your going away. Rake through your departures, search your ways, and be converted from them. Many times matters go such a length in people's forsaking the Lord, that there must be a going over the road of conversion again, in the several steps of it, as at first, Matt. xviii. 3, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." There must be new conviction, compunction, humiliation, &c.

Motive I. If ye will continue to forsake God, he will forsake you utterly, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. We may say, God does not quite forsake us, though we have forsaken him; he is still doing us good, filling our hearts with food and gladness. But that will not last always so; the God that now follows us with mercy, will forsake us too, and give up with us, 2 Chron. xv. 2, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

Motive 2. Heavy will be your case, if God shall forsake you; Hos. ix. 12, "Yea, wo to them when I depart from them." It is comprized there in a word of two letters; but men and angels cannot sufficiently unfold the import of it. Saul got a taste of it in this world, and what a dreadful weight was it on him? 1 Sam. xxviii. 15, "And Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams." How much more dreadful will it be in another world?

Mot. 3. It is a hell by choice; and when it comes to be felt in its vigour, it will be nothing the easier, but the hotter, that it was your own choice. The sentence of damnation runs in these terms, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matth. xxv. 41.

Now men will not stay with him, they will be away. The sending them to hell will be a giving them their will; a forcing them to that in a penal way which is now their sinful choice.

Mot. 4. *Lastly*, The Lord calls you to return, and is courting you to come back. He needs us not; but he sees that we are ruined if we do not come back.

*Secondly*, As to the *second* evil, The betaking one's self to the creature in God's stead.

In speaking to this, let us consider,

1*st*, The object taken up with in God's stead.

2*dly*, How sinners take up with the creature in God's stead.

3*dly*, Why sinners take up with the creature in God's stead.

4*thly*, The ill of this practice.

*Lastly*, Improve the doctrine.

I. *First*, Let us consider *the object taken up with in God's stead.* It is the creature: A sorry exchange, Rom. i. 25. "They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." It has two names in scripture, a negative and a positive one.

1*st*, It is not God; Deut. xxxii. 21. "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God." This is the name of all the cisterns, of the whole creation, chosen in God's room. Whatever it is, whatever excellency be conceived in it, it is a not-god. They take it for a god, and so they take it for what it neither is nor can be; and so they cheat themselves. We may take up this name in these two syllables.

1. It cannot satisfy; Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" There are a great many empty spaces in the hungry

heart, and it cannot fill them up. God's name is *All-sufficient*, Gen. xvii. 1; *Heb. q. d.* that which is commensurable. Hereby he is distinguished from all not-god; none of them all will measure out, nor all of them together, with the necessities of any of us.

2. It cannot profit; 1 Sam. xii. 21, "And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." Whatever not-god one betakes himself to, it can not only not do him good enough, but it can do him no good; Jer. ii. 11, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit. Yea, it can do him no good, even though it were a whole world gained; Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Paul was not out in his reckoning, when he said, (Phil. iii. 8.) "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;—and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." A cistern of one's own hewing out for the fountain, is not only scant of water, but the little that is of it is naught.

2*dly*, It is the world, 1 John ii. 15; the great bulky vanity, Eccl. i. 2; the passing world, 1 John ii. 17; the present evil world, Gal. i. 4; that there is a curse upon, whereby it is doomed to be burnt to ashes, and so can neither last, nor satisfy in the time it does continue. It is a name consisting of three syllables.

1. "The lust of the flesh," 1 John ii. 16, *i. e.* things grateful to the vile body. There is nothing in it for a pure holy soul, but what is noisome to it; as appears from the entertainment it gave to Christ. But the vile world affords for the vile body the pleasures of eating and drinking, of fleshly lusts, luxurious ease. It has wherewith to gratify the senses of touching, tasting, and smelling. And though "the Lord is for the body," 1 Cor. vi. 13, and can and will gratify its senses more than ten thousand worlds; yet men forsake God, and take up with the world and its lusts of the flesh.

2. "The lust of the eyes," 1 John ii. 16, *i. e.* things grateful to the covetous eye; Psalm iv. 6, "Who will shew us any good?" There is nothing in it for the single eye but grievousness, which makes them cry, Hab. i. 3, and makes it a weary land. But it has fuel for feeding the vitiated lusting eye; it affords silver and gold, houses and lands, farms and merchandize, cloths and ornaments, pompous and gaudy sights and shows, husbands and wives, children and servants, &c. And though there is a perfection of beauty in God in Christ, while he is represented as fairer than the sons of men, Psalm xlv.2, and altogether lovely, Cant. v. 16; yet he is forsaken for the

lust of the eyes the world affords; while in the meantime it never satisfies the eye, Eccl. i. 8.

3. "The pride of life," 1 John ii. 16, *i. e.* things grateful to the vain mind. There is nothing in it for the pure mind, but what is vain, or else vile; 2 Cor. v. 4, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." Phil. i. 23, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." But it affords abundant entertainment for the vain mind; airy honours, credit, reputation, and esteem for this and the other fancied or real excellency in a person; a variety for entertaining the musical, light, or malicious ear; airy castles enough, for the fancy to rove up and down in at large, in vain projects, and vile desires, and dreaming enjoyments; and enough to busy the curious, while they live, if they were to live as long as Methuselah, that with all their learning and researches they shall never come to the end of. In God in Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3, full satisfaction for the mind, 1 John iii. 2. But he is forsaken for the world's pride of life, that will fall in a moment like foam on the water, Hos. x. 7.

11. *Secondly*, Let us consider, "How sinners take up with the creature in God's stead." This is done by setting the heart on the creature, giving it the chief or supreme room in the heart which is due to God only. And so men take up with the creature in God's stead: The *steps* of it are these.

Step 1. Raising their esteem of and value for the creature, till it come to overtop their esteem of God in Christ, like Eve with respect to the forbidden fruit, Gen. iii. 6. Men looking on the creature, are often as one standing looking over a precipice, till the head growing giddy, they fall over. Thus Achan came to forsake God for the wedge of gold, Josh. vii. 21. The creature grows more and more bulky and glorious; and the beauty of a God in Christ is more and more vailed; till in end the soul gives the preference to the creature, and determines it is best for it. Now the unhappy match is begun, and the soul is in a fair way to go off to the creature.

Step 2. Bending their chief desire towards the creature, Psalm iv. 6, to obtain it, and the satisfaction they apprehend is to be found in it. The heart goes after it on the wings of desire, the soul flying after it as a ravenous bird on its prey, Prov. xxiii. 5. So the heart is boiling hot upon it, and grows cold towards God, and Esau, Gen. xxv. 30, 32. Then the man is making away to it as fast as he can.

Step 3. Embracing and knitting with it in love, 2 Tim, iv. 10. So Demas loosed his gripes of Paul and the gospel, and fastened his gripes on the world. It gets more of his love than God in Christ,

and all the riches of Christ. He looks for his happiness from it, thinks he would be happy if he could be master of what is in it; and so he cleaves to it in love, till the love of God is extinguished in his heart, 1 John ii. 15. And thus the man has betaken himself to it instead of God, and the fatal new match is made up.

Step 4. Seeking a rest for their hearts in it; Matth. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The man has a restless heart in his breast, that is gaping for something to satisfy it; and he carries it away to the creature, to rest there; to the cisterns, to drink there. And there he sucks at the breasts of the world's consolations, the consolations of God being now tasteless with him.

Step 5. Trusting in it, and having their chief dependence on it, notwithstanding of the curse pronounced against such trust, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. It is their prop that supports them, the pillar they lean on. Happy had they been, if they had had such trust to God as they give to the creature. Though it frowns on them, they trust it will yet smile, and they will wait on; it has disappointed them often, and yet with the greatest confidence they will promise on its head. God's promises, that might be deferred but never failed, they can trust nothing to; but the deceitful promises of the world they trust in.

Step 6. Using their chief and most earnest endeavours for it. Their trust in it is backed with suitable endeavours; they spare no cost, to get out of the creature what they are seeking; Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" They will spend their money on their lusts, and what is better than either gold or money, they will spare no pains; they will labour for it; they will labour in the very fire, and that to weariness, Hab. ii. 13. It is not the sinner's fault, that he gets no satisfaction in the creature; if it were in it, he would surely have it out of it. Meanwhile, as is his trust and dependence on God, so are his endeavours that way; his trust nothing, and his endeavours languid.

Step 7. Rejoicing most in their enjoyment of it, and delighting most in it. It is no more God, but the creature that is the man's chief joy; 2 Tim. iii. 4, "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." The joy of the corn and wine, the crop and cattle, is more to them than the light of the Lord's countenance. They can relish no other joys but what are carnal; let the world smile, the heavens may lower for them, they can be easy; and reign as kings without God, if the kind world will but set a fading crown on their head.

Step 8. Sorrowing most of all for the want of it, under the frowns of it; 2 Cor. vii. 10, "The sorrow of the world worketh

death." They can bear the frowns of the God that made them, better than the frowns of the creature; for the latter has more of their heart than the former. Though God's displeasure is burning against them, forsaking of him is not their grief; it will not mar their joy in the world, but their joy in the world will be an antidote against it; Hos. xii. 7, 8, "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance; in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin." But all the joys of the gospel will now weigh down their sorrows from the creature, Exod. vi. 7—9.

Step 9. Still cleaving to it, under never so many disappointments from it; nor forsaking it, but trying another mean, when one misgives; Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope; thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved." When their expectations in God were deferred, they said, "Why should we wait on the Lord any longer?" and so they forsook him. But do they treat the creature so? No indeed; but when it raises their hope in one thing to the very foundation, they shift about from one creature to another, but never come back to God; when one cistern runs dry, they go to another, but return not to the fountain.

Step 10. *Lastly*, Following the creature whithersoever it goes, even quite over the hedge of the law of God; Eccles. x. 8, "He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." The man that has betaken himself to the creature, he may hold within the compass of lawful enjoyments, and perish by them, Matth. xxiv. 38, 39, "For as, in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." But the sinner, disappointed of the satisfaction expected in lawful things, takes at length the liberty of unlawful; like a beast, that, having ate up all to the red earth within his pasture, breaks over the hedge, and eats up that which is not allowed. Thus the sinner is come to the last step, giving himself the swing in his lusts.

III. The *third* thing is, Why sinners take up with the creature in God's stead.

1. Because the heart of man is naturally wedded to the creature; and that bond not being truly broken, it is apt to return upon occasion to its natural bias. Adam, sinning, left God, and joined the creature; so there is the natural bond, there is the object that gets our first

love. Hence, though the sinner seem to join himself to the Lord, he is apt to return to the creature; and will do it, if the power of grace prevent it not, Hos. xi. 7, "And my people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him.

2. Because man's corrupt nature finds a suitableness and agreeableness in the creature to itself, Isaiah lvii. 10, forecited. Corrupt lusts, which otherwise must starve, find an agreeable entertainment in the creature, an entertainment they can relish or favour, while they cannot favour the things of God, Rom. viii. 5. Even as a swine brought into a palace will get back into an unclean place, where it will get mire and dirt which it cannot get there.

3. Because the creature takes by the eye and other senses; God and his favour is the object of faith, which is rare in the world. Men are naturally much addicted to sense, and apt to be led thereby, and are most feelingly touched by objects of sense; while it requires the exerting of a supernatural power on them to raise on them the faith of things invisible. Hence the natural cry, Psalm iv. 6, "Who will shew us any good?" And therefore God gives his people a spiritual sensation to balance it; ver. 7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

4. Because the creature promiseth a present good, whereas the greatest things of God are reserved to another world. Though God does offer great things in hand to the sinner, Psalm xix. 11, yet the greatest is in hope; but the world's good is offered as a present good; as that which is soon rotten is ordinarily soon ripe too, and contrariwise. Hence the sinner, making the comparison, looks on the spiritual good as the bird in the bush; on the temporal as the bird in hand, and so grips to it, letting the other go.

5. Because, by the power of a strong delusion, conveyed into the nature of man by the serpent in paradise, they expect a satisfaction and happiness in the creature, Gen. iii. 5, 6. It is represented to them in a magnifying glass, as the forbidden fruit was to our first parents; and so strongly is this hope rivetted in them, that though they meet with thousands of disappointments, yet still in new hopes they renew their endeavours to extract it out of them; Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope.

6. *Lastly*, Because they must needs betake themselves to something without themselves, not being self-sufficient; so, having lost God, they fall of course to the creature in his stead; Eph. ii. 12, "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, hav-

ing no hope, and without God in the world:" compared with ver. 3, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind." The sun being gone down on them, they set up their candles to enlighten their darkness, and compass themselves about with their own sparks. When the prodigal wanted bread, he fed on husks: when bread was not in Samaria, asses' heads and doves' dung were used.

IV. The *fourth* thing is, The ill of this practice, taking up with the creature in God's stead; the ill of sin in it.

1. It is an egregious wrong done to God, and his infinite excellency, Jer. ii. 11, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit." To take up with the creature in God's stead, is to affront him, cast dishonour on him, and, as far as lies in us, to ungod him. To pull down the king from his throne, and to put a beggar from the dung-hill upon it; to pull down the sun from the firmament, and set up in its room a twopenny candle; the angels from their seats, and set glow-worms in their stead—would be no such injury as here; for the distance betwixt these is but finite; but that betwixt God and the creature, infinite.

It is a heap of practical blasphemies against God, and vilely misrepresents him, as if he were not,

(1.) The chief good. He is originally good, and the fountain of all goodness that is to be found in any creature; Matth. xix. 17, "There is none good but one, that is God." Therefore he is the chief good. But this practice says, the creature is better than he; else why do men take up with it in his stead? What is our choice, in a plurality of things, one of which we may have, will always be reckoned the best in our judgment.

(2.) All-sufficient. He declares himself all-sufficient in himself, and to his creatures, Gen. xvii. 1. There is enough in him to make all the world of men, yea, a thousand worlds of men, happy; for his perfections are infinite. But the taking up with the creature in his stead, says, There is not enough in him for us. If it is not so, why do not we hold by him? if there is enough for us in God, why are we found at the creature's door? if the fountain is not dry, why at cisterns?

(3.) The most lovely. God is the perfection of beauty and excellency; for whatever is lovely in the creature, is a ray of beauty darted from him; James i. 17, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Every thing has its spots; only "he is altogether lovely," Cant. v.

16; so he is "fairer than the sons of men," Psalm xlv. 2; and nothing is so desirable. But the taking up with the creature gives the lie to this testimony. If the water is sweeter in the fountain than in the cistern, why is the cistern chosen instead of the fountain?

(4.) Communicative, willing to impart of his goodness to his creatures, Matth. xxv. 21. He has parted with his own Son for us, and is willing "with him to give us all things," Rom. viii. 32. And this is the testimony of the gospel of God. Yet sinners by this practice give it out, that all this is false; that they must needs take up with the creature, since the Creator locks up himself from them.

2. It is a wrong done to the creature, as being a putting it out of its proper place. It is a rape committed upon it, a violence done thereto, which makes it groan, Rom. viii. 21, 22. When Rachel put her husband in God's stead, he complained bitterly of it, saying, Gen. xxx. 2, "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" So did the king of Israel, when the king of Syria, he thought, treated him so; 2 Kings v. 7, "Am I God, (said he), to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" So would the whole creation complain of men, if they had a mouth to speak. It exposes the creature to the fire of God's jealousy, Ezek. xxiv. 25. As there is not a readier way to break a bow, than to overbend it; so there is not a readier way to ruin the creature, than to make an idol of it. Nothing sits safe that sits in the seat of God.

3. It is a wrong done to the whole generation of the saints. Asaph takes notice of this in his case, Psalm lxxiii. 12—15, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children." As it affronts their God, it grieves them to the heart; as it declares them to have made a foolish choice, it dishonours them, and proclaims them fools. Thus they sadden the hearts of those whom God has not made sad; and hold them for fools whom he counts wise.

4. *Lastly*, It is an egregious wrong to the sinner's own soul, putting the arrantest cheat upon it that one is capable to do, Prov. viii. 36, "But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." It is the putting one in the hand of the soul, for an end it will never be able to answer. God says, He will be for a God to the sinner; but behold, the sinner says to his own soul, Let the creature be for a God to thee. This is, instead of bread, to give a stone; instead of a fish, to give a serpent.

Use. Then have a horror of taking up with the creature in God's room and stead: look on it as a signal evil, and tremble at the very thoughts of it. And,

1. Look back on your guilt of that kind, and repent. O what of this idolatry has there been, and is there among us! See it, and be convinced and humbled under the sense of it.

(1.) Has not some creature or other had your chief affection set upon it? 1 John ii. 15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." How warmly have your hearts been carried towards it, while nothing for God but coldrife love, languishing desires? &c. The heart has been like a common inn, so thronged with strangers, that there was no room for the Master.

(2.) Have you not served the creature more than God? Rom. i. 25. Ye have all been at pains for the world, and to serve that interest; but so long as ye have lived, what have ye done for God and his interest? Alas! are there not many who set themselves in opposition to it? and at best they think they do very well if they do not act against it; but how few set themselves to advance it. Do ye serve the creature so? No. Then do ye not serve the creature more than the Creator?

(3.) Has not your greatest care been to please another rather than God? yourselves, your lusts, this and the other person, whose favour ye have valued rather than a God in Christ; Gal. i. 10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." How often have sinners pleased themselves and others, at the expense of God's high displeasure; and made their way to their own pleasure, over the belly of all the intimations of God to the contrary.

Look back on these things, see how ye have set up another in God's stead; be ashamed, loathe yourselves, mourn, and repent for these things.

2. Reform, pull down your idols of jealousy; whatever it is that has had God's room with you, cast it down from the throne, and set it in a low place at his footstool; Hos. xiv. 3, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Restore the throne to your Sovereign Lord, reduce the usurper; let a God in Christ command, and let all things else be at his disposal, and modelled according to his will and pleasure, 2 Cor. x. 5.

3. *Lastly*, Watch, and beware of any creature's stepping at any time into the room of God; Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all

diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Keep a jealousy of this sort over your hearts at all times; for there is a propensity in it to fall into this course; and it will be off to the creature, if ye do not guard against it; and in special at some times, particularly,

(1.) When the Lord delays to answer. This is a time when the unbelieving heart, being in a haste, is ready to make its address to the creature instead of God, that it may do for the man what God defers to do. This was the ruining thing to those in the wilderness. God was not like to bring them into Canaan, and therefore they were for going back to Egypt. Resolve ye with the church, Lam. iii. 49, 50, "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not without any intermission; till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven."

(2.) When the creature courts, and the world smiles; Prov. i. 32, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." We are ready to hang by a frowning world; how much more dangerous is it when it smiles on us. Many have been hugged to death thereby. When, therefore, things go according to your wish, take heed ye be not ruined, as the scum the higher it rises, the sooner it runs over and is lost.

Doctrine. II. To forsake God in Christ, and take the creature in his stead, is a wretched exchange.

For clearing of this doctrine I shall take it up in these four points:—

Point I. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for a cistern.

Point II. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain made ready to our hand, for a cistern that remains to be hewed by ourselves.

Point III. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for many cisterns.

Point. IV. *ult.* Forsaking of God for the creature is an exchanging of a fountain for cracked and broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

I return to the first of these, viz.,

Point I. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for a cistern. This is a wretched exchange, if ye consider,

1. The water in the cistern is borrowed water; that in the fountain is from itself. Mark x. 18, "There is none good but—God;" none good essentially, underivedly, but God himself. All the cisterns of created enjoyments must be filled from God as the fountain, or else remain empty. The fountain has a spring in itself, the cistern none. If God communicate not to the creature, it is sapless and foysonless. The whole creation shines with borrowed light. Wha

ever sweetness is in any person or thing created, it is a drop from the fountain, from God. Would one exchange the sun for the stars?

2. The water must needs be sweeter and fresher in the fountain than in the cistern. Who would not drink rather from the spring, than from a vessel of water within the house? The enjoyment of God in Christ is far sweeter than of the whole the creation can afford; Psalm iv. 6, 7, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Every thing is best in God as in the fountain. Heaven's riches, the riches of Christ, are better than worldly riches, which are but a stream from the other; Psalm civ. 24, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." The beauty of Christ surpasses all created beauties; Psalm xlv. 2, "Thou art fairer than the sons of men." The knowledge of Christ is more excellent than all other knowledge, Phil. iii. 8, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;—and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The comfort of the creature is often unsavoury, in God it is ever sweet.

3. The water in the cistern is no more but a certain measure; in the fountain it is unmeasurable. Whatever perfection or goodness is in any creature, there is an end of it which one may reach unto; Psalm cxix. 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection? but thy commandment is exceeding broad." But God's perfections are infinite, there is no end of them. So in all created things there is a want, and therefore the heart cannot find true rest in them; but in God there is no want, the heart may rest in him, Heb. iv. 2, "For we which have believed, do enter into rest." No creature is commensurable to the boundless desires of man's heart; but God is; so in him sinners may be happy for ever.

4. The water in the cistern is mostly very scanty; the fountain is ever full. There is a want in the creature at its best; it cannot satisfy the desires of the heart of man, Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." But even what may reasonably be expected from it, oft-times cannot be had from it; it sinks far below the measure of what it promises; so that often it is as Hag. ii. 16; "When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the press-fat, for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty." But there is a perpetual fulness in a God in Christ, that one can never

come amiss to him, if he should come never so oft. How wretched an exchange must it then be, to exchange the fulness of a Godhead for the empty creature?

5. The water of the cistern is always dreggy; the fountain clear and pure. Hence the end of the one is sorrow, but the other not so; Prov. x. 22, "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." There is a thorn of uneasiness in the softest bed one can make to himself in the whole creation; and the fairest rose wants not its prickles. Lawful enjoyments leave behind them a sting in the heart; and the more comfort one has in them, the more bitter is the parting with them, which cannot be evited. Unlawful ones leave a sting in the conscience, which will sting through eternity, if bitter repentance prevent it not; Prov. v. 8, "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house." See Isa. l. 11, "Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." A devil of covetousness, uncleanliness, &c., rages in some; but bitter will be the dregs of it. But whoso hold by a God in Christ, shall swim in joy unspeakeable for ever.

6. *Lastly*, The water of the cistern is soon dried up; the fountain, never. A few days or years will put an end to all our lawful and unlawful comforts in the creature. A touch of the hand of God, by some heavy disease on the body, may soon make the now healthiest incapable of comfort either of these ways. And if such should spend their days in health and wealth, the moment they go to the grave, the candle will be put out, and they will pay for their folly by everlasting bitterness. But a God in Christ will be an eternal spring of comfort to those that are his.

Use. See then the wretchedness of this exchange, and repent that ye have made it. The result of it in end will be,

1. Cutting disappointment, Luke xii. 19, 20, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" No body forsakes God for the creature, but they think to better their condition thereby: but that is impossible; therefore they must be disappointed, and their expectations frustrated. Isa. xx. 5, 6, "And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whether we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?" They

may get an offputting for a while with the creature to which they betake themselves in God's stead; but the day will come when they shall complain of it, as Job vi. 15, "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away."

2. Bitter remorse, Prov. xxiii. 32, "At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." What comfort had Judas of his thirty pieces of silver, when he saw the end? the rich man of his faring deliciously every day, when in hell he lift up his eyes? Since there is a God, and a judgment to come, he will certainly make those who swill down the cup of sin with so much pleasure now, wring out and drink the dregs thereof too at long run, Psalm lxxv. 8, "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red: it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."

Point II. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain made ready to our hand, for a cistern that remains to be hewed out by ourselves. The wretchedness of this exchange does appear in that,

1. The fountain is always ready for us, the cisterns often are unready. There is access at any time to be had unto God, through Christ, by faith, Psalm xlvi. 1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The man that came to his friend at midnight, had access, and was served of all he wanted, Luke xi. 5—8. God in Christ is that friend, and he will help early, Psalm xlvi. 5. But the creature is an unready help; so that the man's case is often past cure, ere help can be had from that airth.

2. The fountain is made ready for us by another hand, the cisterns must be prepared by our own; Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness." Jesus Christ has opened the fountain of the divine fulness, that we may come to it and drink. It is set wide open in the gospel, John vii. 37.—"Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Adam's sin stopt all the wells of creature-comforts to us; so that we find much ado to get them so far opened, as thence to get a little to quench our thirst: and O what pains it costs men to open them again!

3. At the fountain one has nothing ado but to drink, John vii. 37, but it is no little pains that is necessary to fit out the cistern for us. It is a labour, Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend—your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Matth. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour," and ofttimes a weary labour; Hab. ii. 13, "Behold, it is not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire,

and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity ?" For the cisterns must be hewed out, as out of a rock ; and this hewing work is the work that fills most men's hands all the days of their lives, till death make their tools drop out of their hands. Hewing work is,

1. Hard and sore work. But no hewing is harder than hewing out cisterns of creature-comforts in God's stead. Others may rack the whole body ; but this racks the soul and conscience always, and sometimes the body too, Hab. ii. 13, forecited. How is the heart racked with anxious desires and impetuous lustings ! the mind racked to contrive how to gratify them ; the executive faculty, how to bring it to pass ; and the conscience, to make way over its belly for them ; and the body itself treated in the pursuit, as they would be loth to treat their beast ? Psalm vii. 14, " Behold he travelleth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood."

2. Longsome work, that one comes but little speed in. The truth is, it is so longsome, that it is never at an end with men, till either God's grace reaching the heart cause one give it over as vain work, or else death drag him away from it ; Job xv. 20, " The wicked man travelleth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor." It is a cursed work that one can never by their labour get to the end of. The worldly man must still be hewing ; Eccl. iv. 8, " There is one alone, and there is not a second ; yea, he hath neither child nor brother ; yet is there no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good ? this is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travel." The sensual man must be hewing, to please his fleshly lusts ; Prov. xxiii. 35, " They have stricken me, and I was not sick ; they have beaten me, and I felt it not ; when shall I awake ? I will seek it yet again." The proud man must be hewing, till he get his nest set among the stars ; Obad. ver. 4 ; though ere he gets there justice will throw him down.

3. Weary work on these accounts ; sore and long toil, and that many times for nought, makes weary work, Hab, ii. 13. forecited. O it is an ungrateful world men set their hearts on, that causeth them to go many a foot to no purpose. It is a hard rock, the creature, to work upon, where many a stroke is given for no effect. The man is thirsty, and he hews, but can get no water, Isa. lvii. 10, " Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way." Many a man has much toil, and weary on-waiting, to get his own soul ruined, Jer, ix. 5 ; the mischievous man wakes while others sleep, Psalm, xxxvi. 4 ; the murderer, the adulterer, and the thief wake also, Job xxiv. 14 —16.

Three things make this work about the cisterns such a hewing work.

(1.) The emptiness of the creature, brought into it by man's sin. There is an original emptiness in it, which took place in the state of innocence, that it could never afford a rest to the heart of man. There is an accidental emptiness in it by sin; the scripture calls it vanity, Rom. viii. 20, that it cannot now afford the satisfaction it sometimes could have given, being like an empty husk, a dry and parched ground, in comparison of what it once was, Psalm cii. 26. Now here lies the case; there is less in the creature now, than some time there was; yet men's hearts eagerly seek out of it, and expect from it more than ever was in it. When, then, men in these circumstances fall a-hewing at it, how can it miss to be hard, longsome, and weary work.

2. The curse lying upon it for man's sin; Gen. iii. 17. This has so locked up the little comfort that is in it, that it is made hard work to get at it. Hence so many disappointments, so often falling short of the comfort that otherwise it might really give. Thus, whereas God in Christ is an open fountain, the creature is a sealed cistern many times; Mal. ii. 2, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." And no wonder one find hard work in breaking through Heaven's seal on the creature.

3. *Lastly,* The opposition from Heaven the sinner must lay his account with in this work of his. It is a work which is against God, and God will be against it, and it is hard to kick against the pricks; Acts ix. 5. Providence may let the man thrive in it a while, as the builders of Babel did; but they shall be sensible at length of God's working against them; Hos. ii. 6, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." They shall plant, and God shall pluck up; build, and he shall destroy; they shall beautify, and he shall blast; fill their cisterns, and he empty them. They may find God working against them, and the effect of it on their wicked hearts may be, to cause them how the more forcibly and eagerly, as if they would carry on their work in spite of opposition from Heaven; but assuredly God shall dash them to pieces that contend with him; 1 Sam. ii. 9. 10, "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces, out of heaven shall he thunder upon them."

Use. Sinners, then, lay by your work of hewing out cisterns to

yourselves in God's room and stead. Ye are at a great deal of work in seeking to get the sap and foyson of the creature, in lawful and unlawful enjoyments, for a meal to feed your hungry hearts; and neglect God in Christ. Repent, and come drink of the fountain ready to your hands, and cease your hewing.

Motive 1. Consider, it is unblessed work, Psalm cxxix. 6—8, "Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord." God never set man to it; but Satan, and the corrupt heart, and they, are cruel masters, that fill the hand with self-ruining work. You cannot look to God for a blessing on it.

Mot. 2. It is vain and fruitless work, where ye will never get worth the pains and cost wared on it; Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Ye are seeking out of the creature what is not in it; ye are waring your all upon it; and the cost will quite overgo the profit; Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Hard work may be the better borne that has a proportionable advantage following it; but see the emblem of this; Hab. ii. 13, "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity.

Mot. 3. Ye have found it heavy work already; why will ye insist when God calls you to leave it?

(1.) Have you not in your hewing given many a fruitless stroke? sought and found nothing? Yea we may say as Isa. xxvi. 18, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen;" having been like those hewing at a rock, where no impression could be made.

(2.) Have not the chips in your hewing flown out upon you, to your wounding? Instead of the good and comfort ye have sought from the creature, ye have got hurt by it; Ezek. xxix. 7, "When they took hold of thee by the hand, thou didst break, and rent all their shoulder; and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand." Where ye have expected your greatest comfort, thence has arisen your greatest cross; where the soundest rest, there greatest vexation.

(3.) Have ye not often found, that all your cistern could hold

when ye got it, was not worth the pains ye had been at in hewing it out? How often has your comfort in the enjoyment of the creature sunk vastly below the expectation ye had of it?

(4.) Has not one touch often broke your cistern all in pieces, after ye had been at all pains in hewing it out; and so ye have in a moment lost all your expectation together, with all your pains. How many fine projects for this world do misgive, just when one is looking for the fruit of them? Sometimes a little providential incident, or a piece of one's own mismanagement, breaks all to pieces.

Motive 4. *Lastly*, How will ye answer it, that ye are at so great pains for the cisterns, and will not be at pains to go to the fountain? Men refuse not to labour, to hew for the creature; but they will be at no tolerable pains for the enjoyment of God. O how well might it be with men, if they would be at as much concern to seek their happiness in God, as they are at in seeking it in the creature! But the opened fountain is slighted, while the cistern is hewn out of the hard rock.

Point III. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for many cisterns. When one forsakes God, and betakes himself to the creature, can he hold himself with one creature, as a man with one God? No, he cannot; he must have a plurality, a variety, a multitude of them, in his room; because,

1. None of them are sufficient, but all of them defective. All-sufficient, is a name peculiar unto God alone, Gen. xvii. 1, not communicable to the whole creation, in which, Eccl. i. 14, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting, cannot be numbered." So the man must needs have a second, to make up the want of the first, and a third to make up the want of the second, and so on without end. This labours under one defect, that under another; so there is no rest in any of them.

2. There is something disagreeable and vexing in them all; Eccl. i. 14, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." There are some prickles in the fairest rose, except the Rose of Sharon; some thorn of uneasiness in the softest bed, except the bed of the covenant, the true Solomon's. Did ever anything bear so much delight, but it had withal something to fret you in it or attending it? The agreeableness of it is seen afar; but when one comes near he is made to feel the vexation too. So recourse must be had to one cistern, to put away the bitter taste or unsavouriness of another.

3. They enlarge the appetite, but do not satisfy it; Hab. ii. 5, "Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as

death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people." The more men drink of the cisterns for satisfaction, the more they would drink. As one draught of salt water makes the necessity of another, so the gratifying of a lust doth but open its mouth wider; as is evident from the case of those, who having once given themselves loose reins, nothing can prevail to bind them up, till the grace of God change them. They go from ill to worse.

Now, this is a wretched exchange; for,

(1.) The access to one fountain is far more ready than to many cisterns. He that has but one door to go to for sufficient supply, is certainly in better case than he that must go to many; so he that has the fulness of a God to satisfy himself in, is in circumstances a thousand times better than he who must go from creature to creature for that end. In God you would find happiness, as corn in a heap; whereas in the creature you would have it to pick up here and there, as corn that is sown abroad.

(2.) The water is better that is altogether in one fountain, than that which is parted into many cisterns. United force is strongest; and that which is scattered, the farther it is scattered abroad, it is the weaker. So the consolations of God are mighty, as liquor kept together in one vessel; while the comfort of the creature is comparatively weak, as water spilt on the ground.

(3.) It is with greater ease of mind that one may apply to the one fountain, than to the many cisterns. The multitude of the cisterns to go to for what we need, fills the heart with much perplexity and distracting cares; while the oneness of the fountain creates ease; Jer. xvii. 5—8. O what ease has the man that goes to God's door for all, in comparison of him who begs at the doors of the creatures, ranging up and down among them!

Use. Repent then of this folly, and take the one fountain instead of your many cisterns; go to one God instead of the multitude of created things.

Motive 1. This will contract your cares now so diffusive, lessen your labour, and spare you many a weary foot,

Motive 2. Ye shall find enough in God, that ye shall see no necessity of seeking any happiness without him; John. iv. 14.; more than shall supply the want of the corn and wine; Psalm. iv. 7.; that shall be commensurable to your whole desire; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Motive 3. *Lastly*, Heap up as many cisterns as ye can, they shall never do for you what the one fountain can, never make you easy or satisfied.

Point IV. *ult.* Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchang-

ing of a fountain, for cracked and broken cisterns that can hold no water. A cistern as a cistern holds but little; the broken cistern spills the little put into it. Every created comfort is a cistern containing little at best; but withal it is cracked and broken, that cannot keep the little it has at any time.

(1.) At its best it is cracked; has such rifts in it, as that it begins to lose of the little that is in it. There is a powerful mixture of corruption in the best of persons in the world, whereby no body wants some remarkable defect; and in the best of things there, there is a defect with respect to the heart of man.

2. At length it is broken in pieces. Being always cracked, it is easy broken. All persons here are liable to death, all things to corruption or destruction, whereby they become useless as to our comfort; Matth. vi. 19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." These cisterns can hold no more water for us.

So this exchange is a wretched one; for,

1. The fountain is always certain to go to, the cisterns always uncertain; and worldly men here quit certain for uncertain hope. It is certain, we can never come amiss to God; but as for the creature, it is so uncertain, that there may be nothing in it at all but mud and mire, when we come to drink.

2. The fountain is lasting; the cisterns being broken, guide as we will, will last but a short while. God is an everlasting fountain of comfort; the creature is but for a time, and draws to an end. The whole universe is a cracked vessel, and in a little time it will be all in pieces by the general conflagration.

Use. Come away then from the broken cisterns of the creature, to the fountain of happiness in God. Seek no more your happiness in any thing below the sun; but seek it in a God in Christ.

## THE BIRTH, GIFT, GOVERNMENT, AND GLORIOUS NAMES OF JESUS CHRIST, AS SAVIOUR OF SINNERS.*

Isaiah ix. 6,

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Evrlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

These words bear a joyful intimation or declaration of a great privilege afforded to the children of men; in which the prophet himself shares as one of them, and so is the more feelingly touched with it; and therefore God has employed men to preach Christ to men, that the glad tidings may be brought by such as have equal need of and interest in them with themselves. "For unto us a child is born," &c.

The words are thus plainly connected with the preceding; for the discovery of which we must look back to ver. 2: where the prophet speaks of the light of the gospel breaking up in a dark world by Jesus Christ, as is clear from Matth. iv. 12—16. See the case of sinners before Christ appears to them; they are all in darkness, in a blind, uncomfortable, and dangerous condition. (1.) Some are walking in that darkness, they are bestirring themselves for happiness, and to mend their condition, but they see not their way. Such were the Jews, and all formalists. (2.) Some sitting in that darkness, thickest darkness, pining away in their sin, and not aiming to mend their condition, but like condemned malefactors in a dungeon. Such were the Gentiles, and all profane, carnal persons, having no view but to this world's happiness.

Christ coming unto them, their darkness is dispelled. They that walk, see light which they so much wanted; it breaks up to them in their way. Those that sit, it shines in on them, makes its way into their dungeon. Both see where they are, and how to get their condition mended, how hopeless soever it was.

The effect of this light or saving illumination by means of the gospel; ver. 3, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy; they joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." (1.) The increase of the church, by the enlightened sinner's coming to Christ; as where a light is struck up in darkness, all gather about it. (2.) Great joy; some indeed, viz. the unbelieving party among the Jews, had no more joy in it, than owls have in the sun's shining; they

* Several sermons preached at Ettrick in the years 1725 and 1726.

grudged it, and fretted at it. And so do the enemies of Christ's kingdom at the success of his gospel. But to the spiritual nation of believers the joy is great on that occasion. Christ's new friends on their coming in, and his old friends whom they join, rejoice together; the former on the happy change of their condition, the latter on the increase of the family.

This joy for the greatness of it is compared, (1.) To the joy of harvest, when people get the corn happily cut down and gathered in. (2.) To the joy of a victorious army, when the battle is over, and they are dividing the spoil of their enemies. A gospel harvest, wherein sinners are reaped and gathered in to Christ, a gospel victory over the devil, and dividing the spoils, are most joyful times; as much more joyful than these, as souls are more precious than sheaves of corn, or the precious things of the world.

The cause of this joy, is a great deliverance or salvation brought about to the nation, ver. 4, "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." They were under a burdensome yoke; that is, the yoke of the law as a covenant of works, binding them to obedience under pain of the curse; now that is broken, and they rejoice on that account. They were obliged to carry heavy burdens on their shoulders, by a staff over their shoulder, as the Levites carried the ark; that is, they were under the power and dominion of sin, as real drudges to it, in the several lusts thereof, as those who, to the worst of masters, never want the burden-bearing staff off their shoulder; now that is broken, and they joy. They were under a rigid exactor, a tyrant swaying a sceptre over them; that is, they were under the power of the devil; now his sceptre is broken, he has lost his power over them; and they joy.

How quickly was it done? (Heb. Thou hast made to knap asunder.) The yoke, staff, sceptre, were broken with a touch, suddenly and freely; and that by means very unlikely in the eye of sense, as in the day of Midian, when Gideon with his three hundred men, holding lamps in pitchers in their hands, and breaking the pitchers, and blowing with trumpets, but fighting none, routed Midian quite, Judg. vii. So Christ overcame the devil, by his dying on the cross, and the preaching of the gospel mostly by a few fishermen.

The perfection of it shall be such, that the yoke, staff, and sceptre, shall become a burning and fuel of fire, ver. 5, it shall be absolute; or rather the knapping asunder shall become a burning.

Now in the text, the prophet leads us to the author of all these great events; and answers the question, How can these things be done, and done in favour of us poor sinners? "For unto us a child

is born," &c. says he. The events are indeed great beyond expression, but so is the author of them. There is a great deliverer working this great deliverance, viz. the Messias, Jesus Christ, of whom only it can be understood, and the ancient Jews did understand it. And herein we have,

1*st*, His relation to us. Wherein he is held forth, (1.) As "a child born to us," viz., as Samson was to Israel, born to be our deliverer; Judg. xiii. 5, brought into the world on that very occasion. (2.) As a son given to us, given of the Father as a gift suitable to our necessity. (3.) As one upon whom the management of the ruined affairs of lost sinners is devolved, in order to retrieve them.

2*dly*, The incomparable excellency of this our relative. He is a Child, a Son, a Governor, quite extraordinary. Hear his name shewing his nature and perfections. We cannot comprehend his glorious excellencies; he is "Wonderful;" we may see and wonder at them, but can never fully reach them. For wisdom, he is the "Counsellor," with whom the Father took counsel, and whom he has appointed the Counsellor of poor sinners in their most perplexed cases. For power, he is "The Mighty God," to whom nothing is too hard to do. For continuance, he is "The Everlasting Father," abiding for ever and ever; so that through the whole of time, and through eternity, his wisdom and power shall be forthcoming. And then for meekness, and accessibleness to poor rebel sinners, though he be a "Prince," he is "The Prince of Peace;" speaking, working, granting peace, yea, he died for peace. A wonderful one!

Thus much for a general view of the words; to be in our progress more particularly explained.

The expression may be observed to be full of holy exultation. The prophet expresseth himself in a triumphant manner on this subject. In his days Christ was not come; but he saw him in the promise, by faith; and he speaks of him with as great certainty as if he had been come. He saw the need the world had of him; he felt the need he himself had of him; he believed him to be given to lost sinners for a Saviour, a Saviour in whose hand no one's case could miscarry; and that he was given to himself among others; therefore he cries out as in a rapture, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," &c. *Q. d.* "O my lost brethren, sons of Adam, to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," &c. Hence observe this

Doctrine. Felt concern in the glad tidings of the gospel, fills one with warm affection towards them. It is that same way in other things; where one's own dear interest is concerned, he will be much concerned about that thing; as in the case of partners in trade, where there is a good market.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. Wherein this felt concern lies.

II. What is the warm affection which that felt concern fills with.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. *First*, Wherein does this felt concern lie? It lies in these two:—

1. Felt need of the benefit of the gospel; Prov. xxvii. 7,—"To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." When an indemnity is proclaimed, the man that is not liable to the lash of the law, has no great moving of heart about it; but it makes the condemned man's heart leap within him for joy; Matth. ix. 12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." While men are not sensible of their sin and danger, the gospel will be tasteless and unsavoury to them; but no sooner are the sinner's eyes opened, but it will be sweeter than the indemnity proclaimed to rebels can be.

2. Felt liberty of access to the benefit of it, with others, "To us," says the prophet. While a man sensible of his need of an indemnity, yet finds himself excepted in it; that it is for others, but not for him; this strikes a damp in him, he cannot rejoice in it. And unbelief prevailing so far as to say, "There is no hope," will suck the sap out of the gospel-tidings to you.

II. What is the warm affection that felt concern fills with? It is,

1. A warm affection of joy in it. They rejoice in that it is so, that "to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given," even though that they have not as yet a special saving interest in him; Matth. xiii. 44, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The sick will joy in the tidings of a physician able and willing to cure them, even before they are actually cured; and sensible sinners believing they may have access to Christ, will joy in that.

2. A warm affection of desire, actually to partake of the benefit. The sinner's felt need tells him he must go to Christ, as felt liberty of access tells him that he may go. And both inflame his desire.

Use 1. The reason why the gospel is so very tasteless to most of the hearers of it, is, they do not feel their own concern in it. They believe not the doctrine of the law, nor the doctrine of the gospel neither, with application to themselves. They are either under the plague of stupidity and insensibleness of their need, or else under the plague of unbelief and hopeless. The news of a good or ill market affects them, for they see their concern in either; but they are not affected by either the threatenings of the law, or the joyful tidings of salvation in the gospel.

2. Labour to see your interest in the gospel, if ever you would be brought to relish it, and entertain it. You need this Saviour, without him ye are undone; ye may have this Saviour; if ye miss him, it is your own fault. Your great interest for eternity lies in this gospel, however ye entertain it.

## CHRIST PRESENTED TO MANKIND-SINNERS.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*Unto us a Child is born.*

This is the first part of the glad tidings so much affecting the prophet. The world waited long for Christ's coming into it; and here the prophet gives the news, that long-looked for is come at last. The "Child is born." The word rendered *child*, is a name of the sex, "a man-child," and is just a lad, a lad-child; such was our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a name common to the young of the male sex, competent to them whenever they are born, and continuing with them during their younger years, till they be grown men. The word rendered *born*, doth signify more, even to be shewed or presented born. It is a custom so natural, that it has ever been in the world, that when a child is born and dressed, it is presented or shewed to its relations, for their comfort. So Machir's children were presented to Joseph their great grandfather, and on that occasion given him on his knees; Gen. l. 23; and Ruth's son to Naomi; Ruth iv. 17. So says the prophet, This wonderful child is presented, viz. to his relations. And who are these? He has relations in heaven; the Father is his Father, the Holy Ghost his Spirit, the angels his servants; but it is not these who are here meant. It is *to us*, the sons and daughters of Adam; we are his poor relations; and to us as his poor relations on earth, sons of Adam's family, whereof he is the top-branch, this Child is presented born, for our comfort in our low state.

Doctrine. Our Lord Jesus Christ is upon his birth presented unto us mankind-sinners, as his relations.

In speaking to this presenting of Christ as a born Child, I will shew,

I. What is presupposed in it.

II. To whom he is presented.

III. How he is presented.

IV. The import of this being presented to us.

V. Wherefore he is presented to us on his birth.

VI. *Lastly*, Apply the doctrine.

I. I shall show what is presupposed in it. It presupposeth,

1. The birth of Christ was expected and looked for. The church, his mother, Cant. iii. 11, had an early promise of it; Gen. iii. 15. And it was in virtue of that promise he was conceived and born; all mankind besides, by another word, viz., Gen. i. 28, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Though Mary his mother in a proper sense, was no longer than ordinary big with him; yet the church, his mother in a figure, was big with him from that time; Gen. iii. 15, for about four thousand years. Many a time the delivery was looked for; and she was in hazard of thinking it a false conception, it was so long a coming forward. Kings and prophets looked and longed for the day; Luke x. 24, "I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." The whole church of the Old Testament also longed for Christ's day; Cant. viii. 14, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices.

2. Christ is now born. The happy hour of the long-looked for birth is come, and the Child is come into the world. Angels proclaim it; Luke ii. 10, 11, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The fathers, kings, and prophets were in their graves, who died in the faith he would be born; and now it is come to pass. He was really born; a little Child, though the Mighty God; an Infant, not one day old, though the Everlasting Father. Wonderful birth! such as the world never saw before, nor ever shall see again.

3. Some have been employed to present this Child to the friends and relations; and they are still about the work. O honourable employment! more honourable than the office of presenting a newborn prince of the earth to a king, his father. Joseph and Mary had the office of presenting him to the Lord; Luke ii. 22. But who has the honour of presenting him to us? Why,

(1.) The holy Spirit has the office of presenting him internally to us; 1 Cor. ii. 2, 4, "For I determined (says Paul) not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power." And by him his Father presents him to us; Matth. xvi. 16, 17, "And

Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Thus sinners have presented to them in his heavenly glory, so as they get a broad sight of him, such as is to be had on earth, by faith; John i. 14, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

(2.) Ministers of the gospel have the office of presenting him to us externally, in the swaddling-clothes of word and sacraments. They are employed to present believing sinners to Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 2, "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ;" and to present Christ to sinners, to be believed on. They come with old Simeon, with the holy child Jesus in their arms in gospel-ordinances, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, and say with John Baptist; John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

4. *Lastly*, This child is actually presented to us on his birth. Few, if any, were witnesses to his birth, it was so very mean and low in its circumstances; but that there might be no doubt of his being born, he has been, and still is presented to multitudes, Gal. iii. 1.

II. To whom is Christ presented?

1. Negatively, He is not presented to the fallen angels; he was not born for them, they are none of his relations, Heb. ii. 16, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Their house was originally more honourable than the house of Adam; but Christ has put an honour on the house of Adam, above the house of angels. The holy angels are his servants, the evil angels his executioners; but holy men are his brethren.

2. Positively, He is presented to mankind sinners, those of the house of his father Adam. To them is the voice directed, John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. "To us a child is born," Luke ii. 10, 11. He was first presented to the Jews, shewed to Israel, John i. 31; but then to all the world indifferently, of whatsoever nation, Mark xvi. 15. Hence, from the uttermost parts of the earth, songs are heard, upon occasion of shewing him born to them, his glory appearing unparalleled. Particularly,

(1.) He is presented to the visible church, even to all and every one of them. There are indeed many in the world to whom he is not presented; they have neither his voice or fame, nor seen his shape represented in the word; but wheresoever the gospel comes,

there Christ is presented to every person as born to them; Acts xiii. 26, "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." He is now bodily in heaven indeed; yet really, though spiritually in the word and sacraments, presented to sinners, and seen by faith; though the most part will not behold him.

(2.) He is presented effectually to all the elect. Christ is revealed in them, Gal. i. 15, 16. Hence they believe on him, and so it is with all them, however others entertain him; Acts xiii. 48, "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." They are all as Paul was, in a sense, chosen to see the just one; and their seeing him with a spiritual eye, makes them willing to part with all, and purchase the field and treasure, and the one pearl.

Use. Since Christ is presented to us as a child born, then see well how you entertain the honour done you, in the Prince of Peace being upon his birth presented to you. Some at this season pretend to honour his birth, by observing a day they count the day of it.* But where is the divine appointment of that day? is it not like Jeroboam's feast? 1 Kings xii. 33, "So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense." And can men soberly think, that their feasting, eating, and drinking, as usual on that day, does indeed honour Christ? But,

1. Embrace him, with old Simeon, in the arms of faith. Knit with him, open your heart to him.

2. Kiss the Son, receiving him as your Lord, and King, and God.

III. How is Christ presented? He is presented,

1. In the preaching of the gospel, Gal. iii. 1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" To whomsoever the gospel comes, Christ is presented to them, as being in the word of the gospel to be discerned by faith; Rom. x. 6—8, "But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or Who shall descend into the deep, (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;) but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach." In the word the bridegroom's picture is drawn, in his birth, life,

* This discourse was preached on the 26th of December, 1725, the day after what is usually called Christmas.

death, &c.; in his willingness and ability to save, &c. It is the looking-glass held before their eyes, in which they may see him; 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

2. In the administration of the sacraments. As in the word he is presented to the ears, in the sacraments he is presented to the eyes. In them there is a lively representation of Christ bleeding and dying on the cross for sinners; "This is my body," &c. Though he is not corporeally present in the sacraments, yet he is really and spiritually so, to the faith of believers, which realizeth invisible things; Heb. xi. 1, "Faith is—the evidence of things not seen." And glorious views are to be had of him there; Luke xxiv. 35, 'And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of bread."

3. In the internal work of saving illumination. The Spirit of the Lord not only gives light, but sight, to the elect; not only opens the scriptures to them, but opens their eyes, and reveals Christ in them; Gal. i. 15, 16. This is that demonstration of the Spirit Paul speaks of, which is the immediate antecedent of faith; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, forecited; without which no man will believe. This is the finding of the treasure, the one pearl, Matth. xiii. 44, 46.

IV. What is the import of his being presented to us? It bears,

1. Our special concern in his birth. The birth of Christ concerns us nearly; why else is he presented to us? The holy angels had a concern in it, as servants of the family, to carry the tidings of it; the fallen angels found themselves concerned in it, as a birth that would be the ruin of their interest in the world; but we have a peculiar interest in it, as the birth of a Saviour to us; Luke ii. 11; the bringing in of a better hope.

2. Our relation to him. He is presented to us as his relatives. Sinners of mankind have a common relation to Christ; a relation to him in respect of his nature he assumed, the human nature; Eph. v. 30, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" a relation to him in respect of his office; he is born the Saviour of the world, and therefore our Saviour; John iv. 42, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14, "The Father sent the Son, the Saviour of the world." He was born to save sinners, to seek that which was lost, &c.; therefore our Saviour, our seeker.

3. An owning of our relation to him. The presenting of him to us upon his birth, is an open testimony given of our being related to him. Though we are poor and naughty relatives, he is not

ashamed to own us, nor does our unworthiness make him disown us; Heb. ii. 11,—"He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He is born for our help, to raise up again Adam's broken family; and since he comes to help us, and set us up again, the more poor, and needy, and worthless we are, the more honour redounds to his name at length.

4. *Lastly*, The comfortableness of his birth to us. Children are presented on their birth to their relations, for their comfort; and so is Christ to sinners of mankind. Never was there such a comfortable birth in the world as this. The whole world of mankind-sinners was born in sin, never so much as one of them all missed the contagion; and so are born children of wrath. By this means the whole world was sitting in a most miserable and deplorable case when Christ, as a public person, was born with a sinless, holy human nature.

V. Wherefore is Christ presented to us on his birth?

1. That we may see the faithfulness of God in the fulfilling of his promise. The promise of Christ was an ancient promise, the accomplishment whereof was long delayed; but now we see it is performed in its time; and thence may conclude, that all the rest of the promises depending thereon shall be fulfilled in their season.

2. That we may rejoice in him. The very birth of his forerunner was to be a joy to many, Luke i. 14; how much more his own? The angels sang for joy at the birth of Christ, Luke ii. 13, 14. And he is presented to us, that we may join them in their song; for it is matter of great joy; Luke ii. 10, 11. And whoever see their danger by sin, will rejoice on Christ's being presented to them, as a condemned man on the sight of the Prince by whom he is to obtain a pardon.

3. That we may look on him, see his glory, and be taken with him, John i. 14. For this cause sinners are often invited to look unto him, Isa. xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Cant. iii. 11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." The looking on the forbidden fruit has so vitiated the eyes of mankind, that the things of the world appear as in a magnifying glass; and there is no getting a right view of them, till we behold Jesus in his glory.

4. *Lastly*, That we may acknowledge him in the character in which he appears, as the Saviour of the world, and our Saviour. For he is presented as a young prince, to be acknowledged heir to the crown. The Father has made choice of him to be the Saviour

of the world by office, and given him to us for our Saviour, and presents him accordingly for our acknowledgement.

Use. I exhort you then to believe, that Christ is on his birth presented to you as his relations. And if ye enquire what is your duty on that occasion? I answer,

1. Embrace him cordially; Psalm xxiv. 7, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Old Simeon, when he was presented in the temple, took him in his arms with full satisfaction of soul; Luke ii. 28, 29. He is now in heaven as to his bodily presence; but he is presented to you in the gospel, embrace him by faith, with the heart believing on him for all his salvation, renouncing all other saviours for him, betaking yourselves to him for all, for a rest to your consciences and your hearts.

2. Kiss him, Psalm ii. 12, with a kiss of love; giving him your hearts, "My son, give me thine heart;" with a kiss of honour, honouring him in your hearts, lips, and lives; and with a kiss of subjection, receiving him as your Lord, King, Head, and Husband.

3. Bless him; his name; Psalm xcvi. 2, "Bless his name." He is God blessed for ever. But we are to bless him, as we bless God, declaratively, proclaiming him blessed; Psalm lxxii. 17; praying from the heart that his kingdom may come; Psalm lxxii. 15.

4. Worship him. So did the wise men of the east; Matth. ii. 11. He is the everlasting God, therefore to be adored; Psalm xlv. 11. "He is thy Lord, and "worship thou him;" thy Husband, thy King, thy God. Worship him with internal worship, consecrating your whole souls to him; and worship him with external worship.

5. *Lastly*, Present unto him gifts. So did the wise men, Matth. ii. 11. Make a gift of your hearts to him; Prov. xxiii. 26; of yourselves wholly, 2 Cor. viii. 5; to glorify him in your souls, and bodies, your substance, your all.

## CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, GIFTED TO SINNERS.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*Unto us a Son is given.*

This is a second part of the glad tidings which did so much affect the prophet. And therein Christ is proposed, (1.) As a Son. This is not to denote the sex; that was done already in the former part.

But it denotes a Son by way of eminency, "fairer than the sons of men." Our Lord Jesus was the Son of God from eternity, he became the Son of Mary in time; Luke ii. 7. According to his human nature, he was the Son of Mary; but he is not in respect of that nature called the Son of God, though even in that respect he was a Son quite extraordinary. For as he was man, he was "without Father;" Heb. vii. 3; and as he is the Son of God, he was "begotten of the Father;" Psalm ii. 7, and "the only begotten of the Father;" John i. 18. But as he was man, he was not begotten at all; and he has "brethren;" Heb. ii. 11. Therefore he is not called "the Son of God" in respect of his human nature. Now, in the preceding clause, he is proposed as a Son in respect of his human nature, being called a lad-child born; therefore here he is called a Son, as the Son of God in respect of his divine nature. And thus he is held forth to us here as God-man, with two distinct natures. (2.) As a "Son given to us." The Father has made a free gift to us poor sinners, of his own Son, for the remedy of our misery. As our misery was great, so the gift is fully proportioned to it, being the greatest that Heaven had to afford, or the world could receive.

Doctrine, The Son of God in man's nature, is given to us poor sinners for remedy of our misery.

Here let us consider,

I. The gift itself.

II. The Giver.

III. The party to whom he is given.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply the doctrine.

I. *First*, Let us consider The gift itself. Many precious gifts have come from heaven to earth, yea, all we have is Heaven's gift; James i. 17, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." But this is the great gift. On this head, let us consider,

1*st*, What this gift is.

2*dly*, Wherein it appears and comes to us.

3*dly*, What a gift it is.

*First*, Let us consider What this gift is. It is,

1. A person. Persons are more excellent than things, in their several kinds. All a man hath he will give for his life; a soul is more precious than a world. So this gift is more precious than the whole world. Whatever thou wantest, if thou have Christ, thou art better than to be emperor of the world; if thou hast him not, thou hast nothing that can compensate that want.

2. A divine person. This gift of God is God; John i. 1, "In the

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." O what a gift must God himself be! it is therefore an "unspeakable gift;" 2 Cor. ix. 15. The possessor of this gift must needs be blessed; Psalm cxliv. 15, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Here is a mystery, a divine person gifted to poor sinful persons. God has given angels to be ministering spirits to his people; Heb. i. 14; but we will cease to wonder at that, when this comes in view.

3. The second person, the Lord Jesus Christ; John iv. 10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The third person, the Holy Spirit, is also given to poor sinners; Luke xi. 13,—"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" But here it is the Son that is given, and the gift of the Spirit follows thereupon. Man, by creation the son of God, fell out of God's family; and the beloved Son of the Father is given to bring him in again. He was pitched upon; for he only could be both sent, and send the Spirit, according to the manner of working of the adorable Trinity.

*Secondly*, Let us consider, Wherein this gift appears and comes to us. Those who send gifts, precious gifts, to others, wrap them up in something that is less precious. And a treasure sent in earthen vessels, is the method of conveyance of the best gifts from heaven to earth. And the Son of God being the gift, was sent vailed and wrapped up in our nature; (Tim. iii. 16.) to us. The Son becomes a lad-child, born of a woman. This vail laid over the gift sent to poor sinners, was,

1. Less precious than the gift itself. The human nature of Christ was a created thing, his divine nature uncreated. What disproportion is between the clay and potter, the creature and the Creator; that was between the vail and the gift wrapped up in it. Hence it was like a most precious pearl, sent in an earthen pitcher; which uses not to contain such a precious thing. Therefore the world received him not, because they perceived him not, seeing only the vail, a few only excepted; Mark iv. 11, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Nay, the gift was never clearly seen, till the pitcher it was in was broken in pieces, by his death; and the shells gathered up, by his resurrection, and new cast; and set up in the upper house, by his ascension.

2. Howbeit, it was a cleanly thing. Though men send their precious gifts in some coarse thing, yet it will always be cleanly; they

will not send their gifts in a foul thing. The human nature of Christ, though infinitely below the dignity of his divine nature, yet was a holy thing; Luke i. 35, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." His soul was holy, and his body too, perfectly holy; without the least stain or spot; Heb. vii. 26, "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners." This gift could not have remained in a vail, having the least spot of sin, more than flaming fire in a tainted cloth, which it would presently burn up. Now, this gift appeared and was sent to us in the vail of the human nature,

(1.) That it might be capable of the treatment it behoved to undergo for our relief. It behoved the Son of God to suffer; Luke xxiv. 26, "For without shedding of blood, there could be no remission;" therefore he behoved to be incarnate, and to appear in our flesh. He put on our nature, as his suffering attire, as prison garments; and so the gift was, as it were, sent us in a winding-sheet; and the Son, the Lord of life, came down, as it were, in a suit of dead-clothes of our flesh; because he was to die in it. Howbeit, this suit of our flesh is not now laid aside, but turned into a suit for the court, being no more mortal, but immortal, bright, and shining more gloriously than the sun; so that the gift now appears through it, and will for ever most illustriously. A pledge hereof was given in his transfiguration; Matth. xvii. 2.

(2.) That it might be suited to the weakness of the capacity of the receivers. As he who gifts a sword, sends it in a scabbard, and not naked, lest it should harm the receiver; so God giving his Son to sinners, gave him wrapped up in the vail of human flesh. The Son of God in his unvailed glory would have no more been an object for our eyes to have looked on, than the shining sun to the eyes of an owl. A few rays of his glory, breaking out from under the vail, made his enemies fall to the ground; what would have come of us then, if there had been no vail at all?

*Thirdly*, Let us consider, What a gift this is. The gift of the Son of God to poor sinners as a matchless gift, singular for,

1. The worth of it; Prov. viii. 11, "Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." Many worthy gifts God has given; but this is "the gift of God" by way of eminency, as if he had never given another; John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c. Never did Heaven's bounty appear so much as in this gift; John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. If it were led in the balance with ten thousand worlds, they would be lighter than vanity in comparison of it; nay, balanced with the gift

of created graces, and the created heavens, it would downweigh them; as the bridegroom's person is more worth than his jewels and palace.

2. The unsuitableness of it. Ransack the earth and seas, the whole vault of heaven; go through the upper house amongst all the shining angels; no person, no thing, shall be found so suitable for our case as this gift which is given us; Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The earth, seas, and air, afford for the back, belly, and purse; but there is nothing there to give life to a dead body, far less to a dead soul. But (1 John v. 12.) "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." The angels in heaven might have condoled our loss, but could not repair it like him; Ruth iv. 6, "And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance; redeem thou my right to thyself, for I cannot redeem it." Nay, they could not have shown how to do it; Rev. v. 3, 5. But there is in Christ what is suitable to all the cases of all sinners.

3. The seasonableness of it. Many a gift has been marred, by its coming out of season; but this gift was given most seasonably. No sooner was mankind broken and ruined, but as soon the upmaking gift was proclaimed, Gen. iii. 15, in a promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Seasonably was the ram afforded for Isaac, while he lay bound on the altar; a type of the Son given to and for poor sinners, when justice had the knife at their throat.

4. The comprehensiveness of it. It is all in one; Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Whoever have Christ, have all in him, and are complete in him; Col. ii. 9, 10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." All grace is in him, relative and real. God giving Christ to sinners, gives them remission of sin, and sanctification. All glory and happiness is in him; 1 John v. 11, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." All that is necessary for our bodies in this life is in him, for he is "heir of all things," and is Lord of the whole creation; Psalm viii. 6, &c. Whatever we want is in him, formally or virtually. He is meat, drink, and clothing, lodging for the soul

directly. He is all this for the body indirectly, as money answereth all things.

5. *Lastly*, The unrestricted freeness of it. As it is absolutely free to some, so it is absolutely free to all; John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is freer than a gift? The joint-stock of the whole world could not have purchased this gift. It is quite below the honour of the Giver and gift, for any to pretend to come with money in their hand to grace's market; Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." And all are alike free and welcome to it; Rev. xxii. 17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Use 1. Beware of slighting this gift. It is a person, to take notice of the slight put upon it; a divine person, to make the slight highly criminal, and to avenge it; the second person, the Saviour, the Mediator, whose office is to make peace, and there is not another Mediator; Psalm ii. 12, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." The slighting of this gift is the sin of this day.

2. Take heed ye miss not to perceive this gift. The Jews were ruined in their unbelief; for they could not see through the vail that the gift was wrapt up in. And so it is to this day. Most men see no farther into the mystery of Christ than the outward appearance it makes in the world, as administered in the word, sacraments, &c.; and they despise it. Look ye inward.

3. Admire the wisdom of God, and his infinite condescension, in the manner of the conveyance of this gift of the Son. Behold him in our nature, that he might suffer, and guilty ones may approach him.

4. *Lastly*, See here how you may be made up and enriched for time and eternity. And prize and receive this gift singular for its worth, suitableness, seasonableness, comprehensiveness, and freeness as ye have heard at large. Why should we continue in such a poor condition, when such a gift is made to us, and nothing remains but to receive it?

II. *Secondly*, Let us consider the Giver. And,

1*st*, Who is the Giver? The Giver is God; John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c.; and could be no other, since the gift is a divine person. And it is particularly God the

Father; John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c.; and could be no other person of the Godhead, since the gift is the Son. Here is the spring and original source of our salvation. The Father saw mankind was ruined, no help for them in the creation; and rather than they should perish without remedy, he makes a gift of his Son to them, for remedy of their misery. And to exalt the Giver's free love and grace herein, observe from the word three things there marked about it.

1. It was his own Son he gave; Rom. viii. 32, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," &c. All the sons in the world were at his disposal; but as none of them could redeem his brother, so none of them were made the gift. The angels were his sons improperly; to have parted with one of them, would have been much: but they could not answer the end; so he gave his proper Son, the express image of his person.

2. It was "his beloved Son" that he gave; Luke xx. 13, "I will send my belovod Son," &c. He loved upright Adam as his son; he loved the holy angels as his sons; but he had one, the express image of his person, and brightness of his glory; who was "the beloved Son," whom he loved more than them all; and him he gave. Jacob had a beloved Son, Benjamin; and he could not think to part with him, to venture him to Egypt; but God gave his beloved Son into the world, though to die there without peradventure.

3. It was "his only begetten Son" he gave; John iii. 16. Jacob thought it a good reason for refusing to let Benjamin go down to Egypt with his brethren; Gen. xlii. 38. And every body knows it is hard to part with an only son; Zech. xii. 10. So that was Abraham's trial; Gen. xxii. 2, "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of;" a type of the Father's giving his only Son for sinners.

2*dly*, What has he given sinners, gifting his Son to them? The tongues of men and angels cannot fully express this. I shall give a general view of it in three things. Giving his Son,

1. He has given them himself. For the "Father is in him," John xiv. 11; and "they are one," John x. 30. He is "the true God," 1 John v. 20. "The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him," Col. ii. 9. So, if you will receive his Son, ye are possessed of the Father for your Father, &c. All the persons of the Godhead are yours, all the perfections of God, all his works, &c. O wonderful gift of the Father!

2. He has given them eternal life. The Son of God is the life;

John xiv. 6; "eternal life," 1 John v. 20. Sinners are naturally in a state of death, yea, they are liable to dying eternally; but behold, in the gift of the Son, the Father has given them eternal life 1 John v. 11. O enriching gift! Life to the dead is the greatest gift that can be bestowed on them. Here is life, legal life, moral life, a life of comfort; and all eternal.

3. He has given them all things; Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Therefore says the apostle of those who have received Christ, 1 Cor. iii. 21, "All things are yours." The Son of God is the "heir of all things;" Heb. i. 2. Receiving him, we become "joint-heirs with him," Rom. viii. 17; and so "inherit all things," Rev. xxi. 7.

Use 1. Let us admire the love of the Father to poor sinners of Adam's race. The love of the Father is proposed as an object of admiration, in making sinners his sons; 1 John iii. 1, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" But here is a step higher, his giving to them his Son; John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. But, ah, how is it lost on a blind ungrateful world, that take no notice of it! They will be apt to conclude God's special love to them, from his laying to their hands plenty of common favours; but the love of the Father, in giving them his Son, comes not in mind.

2. Dreadful must the hazard of slighting this gift be, as the crime in it is atrocious. As ye would not run in to the deepest of guilt, and expose yourselves to God's fiercest wrath, slight not the gift of his Son made you. God has given us his own Son, his beloved Son, his only begotten Son, and in him, himself, &c. The greater the gift, the greater the love in making it, the greater is the sin, and the greater will be the wrath, for the slighting of it; John iii. 19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

III. The *third* thing is, The party to whom he is given. Here let us consider,

1*st*, To whom he is given.

2*dly*, In what respects he is given.

3*dly*, In what character he is given.

*First*, To whom is he given? He that believes the Son of God to be given to sinners, and lays the matter to heart, will be ready to say, O but whom is he given to? I fear he is not given to me; and what am I the better then? But

Christ is given to mankind-sinners indefinitely. It is not to the elect only, but to sinners indefinitely, elect or not elect; sinners of the race of Adam without exception, whatever they have been, whatever they are; whatever qualifications they have, whatever they want. The Father, in making of this gift to us, had no eye to any qualification in us, but our misery and extreme need; and, in the view of that, he made this gift for their remedy.

1. This gift and grant is conceived in the most ample terms, without any restriction to any particular set of men; John iii. 16, "God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You see here it goes as wide as the *world*, the *world of men*, to exclude fallen angels, but none of the family of fallen Adam. Therefore, says the prophet, "To us a Son is given." They will get no approbation of Christ nor his Father, who curtail and hem in this grant, as they consult not his nor his Father's honour therein.

2. Christ is given to mankind-sinners, as the manna was given to the Israelites. Now the manna was given to the Israelites indefinitely; to them who loathed it as well as to them who loved it; John vi. 31—33, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And therefore Christ is given to sinners indefinitely, without exception of any; therefore says Christ to the unbelieving Jews, verse 32, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

3. There is made to mankind-sinners indefinitely a gift of the benefits of his purchase, which yet are never given but in and with himself; Rom. viii. 32, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" There is a gift of righteousness made to them, Rom. v. 17, which is revealed to faith, chap. i. 17, *i. e.*, to be believed on and trusted to. Eternal life is given them, 1 John v. 11; and a promise of entering into his rest is left them, Heb. vi. 1.

4. *Lastly*, If Christ were not given to mankind-sinners indefinitely, but there were some in the world who have no part in the gift of Christ, then the ministers of the gospel might not offer him to all, nor might all receive him. Not the first; for no man has power to offer to any the Father's gift, to whom it is not given of the Father; more than a servant has power to offer his master's gift to one to whom his master has not made the gift. Not the second, for none can lawfully take what God does not give him; John iii. 27, "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given

him from heaven." It would be presumption in thee to take a bit of bread, or a drink of water, if God gave it not thee; much more it would be presumption in thee to take his Son, if he gave him not to thee. But it is no presumption in any sinner of mankind to take Christ; 1 John iii. 23, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Mark xvi. 15, 16, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," &c.

*Secondly*, In what respects is Christ given to them? "To us the Son is given."

1. In respect of allowance to take him. Ye all have the Father's allowance to take Christ, to possess yourselves of him, without fear of vicious intromitting with him. The Father's allowance was proclaimed by a voice from heaven; Matth. xvii. 5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him;" and by his messengers; Matth. xxii. 9, "Go ye therefore into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." If you were desiring something of a neighbour that you needed, and he should use no other solemnity in giving it you, but only say, Well, I allow you, take it; would ye question the gift of it, or fear to take it? Now, the Father gives you the same allowance, Well, I make an offer of my Son to you, and allow you to take him; take him then as I offer him.

2. In respect of legal destination. That is more than a simple allowance. There is an act passed in the court of heaven, destinating and appointing a crucified Christ for the world of mankind-sinners, as a Saviour; 1 John iv. 14, "And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world." As the brazen serpent was the ordinance of God for cure to the stung Israelites, the cities of refuge for manslayers among them; so is Christ the ordinance of God for mankind-sinners, John iii. 14—16. If ye had an act of parliament appointing a thing for you, ye would not question its being given you; here ye have more,

3. In respect of real offer. The word in the book of God offers him to all without exception, and the preachers of the gospel personally make, or may make the offer, wheresoever they come; Mark xvi. 15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Hear God's own offer; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;" the ministerial offer; Matth. xxii. 4, "And he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are

ready; come unto the marriage." It is so real, that they will be condemned for refusing it to whom it is intimated. So all are not only allowed and have the gift legally destinate for them; but it is offered to them; God says, Take, and welcome.

4. In respect of the freeness of the offer. There are some gifts so hampered and clogged with conditions in the offer of them, that they are not free gifts, and are in effect put out of the reach of the party-receiver. But this gift is absolutely free; no qualification, no condition, is required of us, that we may have it, but to receive it; Rev. xxii. 17, "And the Spirit and the bride, say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come; And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." No money, no price, is here demanded, Isa. lv. 1. More than all that,

5, *Lastly*, In respect of exhibition. God not only allows, has destinate, and offers freely, this gift to you; but it is exhibited to you, presented and held forth as with the hand, God saying, Ho, sinner, here is my Son, take him. This is done in the word of the gospel to all. The gospel not only offers salvation, which it might do, though the salvation were far off; but it brings salvation along with it to the lost sinner, Tit. ii. 21, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." And God doth not stay the exhibiting of his Son to sinners, till they say they will take him, as we do sometimes the bringing out of meat to our friends; but as his voice reacheth their ears, his hand holds him forth, saying, Here he is for you, take him. Ye must take him, as we do sometimes with our meat, holding it out in our hand to our friend, and telling him and pressing him to eat.

*Thirdly*, In what character is Christ given to sinners? He is given of the Father to sinners of mankind in the character of a Saviour. He is given to the elect, and was from eternity, in the character of a surety, undertaking the payment of their debt for them. But he is given to the world indefinitely in the character of a Saviour; John iv. 42, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14, "The Father sent the Son the Saviour of the world." The world of mankind is a company sick unto death, the earth is the hospital where the sick and wounded lie, Christ is the physician given them by his Father's bounty. It is his office to be physician of the hospital, to cure the sick, and that without any fees from them. Every sick man and woman in the hospital may come to him, and employ him as their own physician. Such a gift in the case of men's bodies would be highly esteemed; but this is a thousand times greater, as the soul is of more worth than the body.

Under this, much is comprehended; but I shall comprehend the same in a threefold character. He is given to mankind-sinners,

1. In the character of a light set up; John viii. 12, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He is given to sinners in a suitableness to their case. It is a dark world; by Adam's fall the sun set on mankind; but Christ is arisen the Sun of Righteousness, to whose light sinners are as free as to the light of the sun and moon, by the gift thereof made; Gen. i. 17, "And God set them in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth." And nothing is to hinder their access to it, but their love of darkness; John iii. 19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

2. In the character of an atoning sacrifice, slain and offered up. He died in the room and stead of the elect only; but being offered for them, and being of sufficiency for the needs of all, he is made the ordinance of God for taking away the sin of the world of mankind, and as such is gifted to them of the father; even as the brazen serpent to the stung Israelites, and the cities of refuge to the manslayers, to look to and be healed, to flee to and be safe; John iii. 14, 15. This is what John asserts in very express terms; 1 John ii. 2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Thus the Baptist pointed him out; John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He taketh away the sin of the world, not eventually, but officially. Compare chap. vi. 33, "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." And thus Christ himself holds out himself as a slain sacrifice, set down for all to eat of and feast on; Matth. xxii. 4, according to the prophecy; Isa. xxv. 6, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the less, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

3. In the character of a crowned king, mighty to destroy the kingdom of Satan, to rescue mankind-sinners his captives and prisoners; 1 John iii. 8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—redemption." Therefore they are called to receive him into their hearts in this character; Psalm xxiv. 7, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." The case of the conquered world, conquered by the king of the bottomless pit, was so hopeless, that none was able to head them for recovery among angels or men; God therefore anointed and gave them his own Son for a King-deliverer; Psalm ii. 6, "Yet have I

set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him—for a leader and commander to the people."

Use 1. Believe it, then, that to us poor sinners the Son of God in man's nature is given; that Christ is given to you in particular; that the Father has made a free gift and grant of his Son Jesus Christ to you, and every one of you.

If ye believe it not, ye make God a liar, disbelieving his gospel; 1 John v. 10, 11, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, That God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." And unless ye believe it, ye will never see Christ; for who can receive from God his Son, when he does not believe he has given him? John iii. 27, "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." As there can be no taking from God without a prior giving, so there can be no receiving of Christ by faith without a prior belief that he is given. Why will ye not believe it?

1. Is the gift too much to be granted? Consider the giver, and it is not too much for an infinite God to give. Gifts are expected agreeable to the state of the giver; what is too much for an ordinary person, is not too much for a King. And can any thing be too much for an infinite God?

2. Is the party gifted too great to be made a gift of? Why, consider he is gifted by his own Father; and the gifting of him tends to his own and his Father's honour, Heb. xii. 2; and he is gifted as Mediator; in which respect he says, "My Father is greater than I;" John xiv. 28.

3. Is the party-receiver too mean and low to have such a great gift conferred on him? Why, truly, this is the language of unbelief. Ye could easily believe that Christ is given to the righteous and holy; and so could the Pharisees. But to believe that he is given to the ungodly and sinners, there lies the difficulty. But pray consider, this gift is not given according to our worth, but our need; and it is evident such need him most; Matth. ix. 11—13, "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And Christ and his Father will have the greater glory in that case.

Use. 2. Receive the gift of Christ then at his Father's hand; take him, and possess yourselves of him by faith.

Motive 1. Consider ye have an absolute need of this gift, Matth. ix. 12, forecited. Ye perish without him; Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved." What need a man starving for hunger has of bread, the naked of clothing; that and more ye have of Christ. That soul of thine that is lost, is crying to thee, O slight not a Saviour! that soul that is sick unto death, Slight not the Physician!

Motive 2. There are some who have as much need as you, to whom yet he is not given, viz. the fallen angels; Heb. ii. 16, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." They must perish for ever without remedy, for Christ was neither given for nor to them. Trample not on sovereign love, that has made the gift to you then, and not to them.

Motive 3. Ye must either receive or refuse. The fallen angels, nay, the poor pagans, to whom the gift is not intimated, are neither receivers nor refusers. But in your case there is no midst, to whom he is both given and intimated. Therefore we say, as Heb. xii. 25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." It will be heavy to be marked refusers of Christ.

Motive 4. Consider the worth of the gift. Men and angels cannot tell it; Prov. viii. 11, "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it." Look into its superlative worth, and resolve to have it, not to let it go. Never such a gift will or can come in your offer again. Therefore buy the truth, and sell it not; take it at any rate, part with it at no rate.

Motive 5. Consider the hand it comes from. Respect to the giver often causeth embracing the gift that one would otherwise slight. The giver is the infinite God. If he should send you a piece of bread out of heaven, as he did the manna, or a cup of cold water; could you take it on you to refuse it? How then will ye adventure, when he sends and gives you his own, his beloved, his only begotten son?

Motive 6. Consider that others before you have received it, and have been made up by it for ever. The saints in glory were once as poor as you; they received this gift; and now they are kings and priests, they inherit all things; and of their happiness there will be no end. So you see that ye may receive it, and that it will be upmaking to you.

Motive 7. Consider that this gift will not always be for the tak-

ing as it is now; Heb. iii. 15, "While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." If men will go on to refuse it, God will call in his gift, and set a bar between them and it for ever; Luke xiv. 24, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." So that the day will come when, if ye would give a thousand worlds for another offer of the gift, ye will not get it; Heb. xii. 17, "For ye know how that afterward when Esau would have inherited the blessing he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Motive 8. Your not receiving will be very heinously taken, as the deepest slight put upon both the giver and the gift. When you make an offer of a gift to a friend, how do ye take that of having it slighted? Think then, how will the father take your slighting the gift of his Son; his Son to be slighted in quality of a gift?

Motive 9. *Lastly*, It will set you at greater distance from God than ever; and will kindle a keener flame of wrath against you, to burn for ever, than if the gift had never been offered you. The Lamb's wrath is dreadful above measure, 2 Thes. i. 7—9, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Matth. xi. 22, "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." Rev. vi. 15—17, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, andwho shall be able to stand?"

See then, salvation is brought to your door, Christ is exhibited as the gift of God his Father to you. Think how you will entertain it, and that ye must answer before his tribunal for what entertainment you give this offer.

## THE GOVERNMENT ON CHRIST'S SHOULDER.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*And the government shall be upon his shoulder.*

As a people whose affairs are ruined have great need of an active and expert governor; so the government of such a people is a great burden. Such a people are lost sinners; and with respect to them these words speak two things.

1. The burden and weight of heading of them, taking the government of them, and management of their affairs. The shoulder is the instrument of bearing burdens; Gen. xlix. 15,—"and bowed his shoulder to bear," &c. Sinners' affairs were so ruined, that it was hard to find one who had a shoulder fit for the government of them; but infinite wisdom finds out one who had shoulders sufficient for the weight.

2. Jesus Christ, the person on whom this burden was laid. The word signifies the principality. The principality in this case was laid upon this Child, this Son. It has been (Heb.) upon his shoulder. It was laid from eternity by his Father, and is, and shall be on him for ever. Princes are, in the style of the Holy Ghost, burden-bearers; Numb. xi. 17,—"And they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." On him was laid the heading of lost sinners, the retrieving of their desperate affairs, and the government and management of them to salvation.

This is a part of the glad tidings of the gospel, and refers to both the preceding clauses, the copulative being used instead of the relative. *Q. d.* "Unto us a Child is presented born, unto us a Son is given, on whose shoulder the government is laid." So the sense is, He is born, presented, and given to us, a Prince and Governor; whom we ought therefore to submit to and receive as our native prince. In this Samson was a special type of him.

Doctrine. Jesus Christ is presented and given to us of the Father as our Prince and Governor, on whose shoulder the burden of the government of ruined sinners of mankind is laid for salvation.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. The occasion of setting up this Prince and Governor.

II. The import of this principality and government laid on Jesus Christ for the benefit of mankind-sinners.

III. The honour, power, and authority belonging to this principality and government of Jesus Christ.

IV. The burden of this principality and government laid on him.

V. *Lastly*, Improve the doctrine.

I. *First*, I shall shew the occasion of setting up this Prince and Governor. It was sinners' absolute need, from which free grace took occasion to set up Jesus Prince over them. Their need will appear in three things.

1. Their first prince was gone, to manage their affairs no more. Adam, their natural head, mismanaged the government quite, sunk their interest, rendered himself incapable of the government, betrayed his trust, and deserted them; their matters being brought to such a pass that it was quite beyond his reach to retrieve them.

2. They were left in confusion, in the hand of the enemy Satan. They were no more a people, as not being God's people; Rom. x. 19; broken from God, and broken among themselves. They were scattered like sheep without a shepherd, having none to head them for their good, or to care for them.

3. Their affairs were desperate. They were in a state of enmity with heaven, a state of slavery to hell. None in earth, nor among the angels in heaven, could be able for the government of them. Allude to Isa. iii. 6—8, "When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing; make me not a ruler of the people. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory." For their matters were beyond recovery by any creature, and no created shoulder fit for the burden.

For such a time as this came Jesus to the kingdom, when none other could or would take the burden of it. When the whole earth could not afford one, Heaven gave sinners a Prince, of shoulders sufficient for the burden.

II. *Secondly*, I shall shew the import of this principality and government laid on Jesus Christ for the benefit of mankind-sinners. It speaks,

1. His near relation to them; as between a king and his subjects by right, head and members. He is to make one body with them; he the Head, they the members; he the Prince, they the people. So that their interest becomes a joint interest; his honour and their advantage are closely linked together.

2. His eminency among them. Whatever persons come into the blessed society, he alone is the Prince there. The kings and monarchs of the earth are but subjects in Christ's kingdom, to receive, not to give laws. His eminency quite overtops all other.

3. His honourable office he has over them. He is the Governor, the only Lawgiver, to whom they all must submit. His Father put this honour on him, and sinners ought to acknowledge it, and honour him accordingly; John v. 22, 23, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

4. His sovereign power and authority over them. He is made a sovereign Prince over the children of men, therefore called the Prince of the kings of the earth; Rev. i. v. He has an illimited power and jurisdiction vested in his person, in this and the other world; Matt. xxviii. 18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He has power of life and death; so he is called the Prince of life, Acts iii. 15.; and the keys of hell and death hang at his girdle, Rev. i. 18.

5. *Lastly*, The burden of the care and duty belonging to the office and station. Many of the princes of the earth value themselves on the honour, little regarding the duty of their place. But this Prince bears on his shoulder, takes the weight of the charge on him, and performs the duty of it; therefore he is called a Shepherd and Bishop of souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25.

III. *Thirdly*, I shall shew the honour, power, and authority belonging to this principality and government of Jesus Christ. I take up this in these four honours vested in his person.

1. The legislative power belongs to him solely; Isaiah xxxiii. 22 "The Lord is our Lawgiver." He gathers a church, which is his kingdom. He is the sole legislator in it; Matth. xvii. 5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" a ministerial explication and application of them being all that any can pretend to, being the officers of this Prince. He is an absolute monarch, whose will is the only law; and none but he has the wisdom and goodness to be trusted with absolute power. To him only belongs the appointing of offices, officers, and ordinances in his kingdom. And whatsoever of that sort has not his stamp and superscription on it in his kingdom, is null.

2. The supreme executive power is lodged with him; John v. 22, "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." And whosoever execute the laws of his kingdom, must have their commission from him, or they intermeddle to their peril. By him rewards and punishments are distributed, and he is Judge of all. Now he judgeth particular persons, churches, and nations; and the time is coming wherein he will appear on his throne

with awful solemnity, and judge and sentence the whole world, Matth. xxv.

3. The power of granting remissions, receiving into peace with heaven, pardoning and indemnifying criminals and rebels; Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." He exercised that power when he was on earth, and much more now. The scribes quarrelled it; Mark ii. 5—7, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" And he wrought a miracle to confirm it; verses 10, 11, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all," &c.

4. *Lastly*, A large and vast dominion, reaching to both worlds, earth, heaven, Matth. xxviii. 18, and hell, and the passage between the two worlds, viz., death; Rev. i. 18. In his hand is,

1. The kingdom of grace; Eph. i. 22, "And gave him to be the head over all things to the church." All grace and favours of heaven are at his disposal. Kings of the earth can bestow silver and gold, houses and lands, on their favourites; but he righteousness, peace, and joy; Rom. xiv. 17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

2. The kingdom of glory; Luke xxii. 29, 30, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom," &c. The eternal weight of glory is in his hand; he is the righteous Judge, whose it is to give the crown of glory; he who admits to, and excludes out of that kingdom.

3. The kingdom of Providence; Eph. i. 22, "And hath put all things under his feet." He rules not only over his kindly subjects, but in the midst of his enemies. The wheel of providence through the world is directed by him. In the same hand the government of the church is lodged, the government of the world is lodged also.

IV. The fourth thing is, the burden of this principality and government laid on Christ Jesus. It is sevenfold.

1. The burden of the purchase of it. It behoved to be purchased by a price of infinite value, and it was laid upon him to do it. "Without shedding of blood there was no remission." And so he re-

deemed the subjects, not "with silver and gold, but his own blood," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The Father is indeed said to give it him, Psalm ii. 8; but that giving is the delivering it upon the paying down of the price; Acts xx. 28, "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."

2. The burden of a war with the devil, for recovering of it. However dear it cost him, he could not have the possession thereof, without vanquishing the power and force of hell, that was engaged to hold fast what they had got. So on the cross he encountered the serpent; Gen. iii. 15; and by his Spirit in the gospel he carries on the war, raising his kingdom out of the devil's kingdom, rescuing the captives and prisoners out of his hands.

3. The burden of subduing them. The designed subjects of his dominion, are born subjects of the devil's kingdom, unwilling to quit with their old master, and to submit to this their new prince; and therefore cannot be brought over without being conquered and subdued, and the burden of this lies on him, Psalm cx. 3; who is mighty in battle, and with the sword of the Spirit makes it effectual in their conversion.

4. The burden of their reconciliation with heaven; Eph. ii. 14, "For he is our peace, who hath made both one," &c. He has the peace to make up betwixt God and sinners, that his dominion may be happy in peace with God. And as he purchased the peace by his blood, so he becomes God's messenger of peace to sinners, and travels between the parties till it be made up, and confirmed by a sure covenant of peace entered into.

5. The burden of their defence and protection; Isa. xxxiii. 21, 22, "But there the glorious Lord will be unto us as a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." The subjects of this prince have many enemies, without them and within them. Satan, the prince of this world is continually making war on them, to withdraw them from their allegiance to their rightful Lord, employs the men and things of this world, and the corruptions lodged within their own breasts, to advance his designs against them: but Christ defends them.

6. The burden of their provision, in all things necessary for life and godliness. He cares for them in all these, from the least to the greatest of their wants; 1 Pet. v. 7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Their food and raiment for their bodies he has the providing of; and his visitation preserves their spirits, laying in new supplies of grace, exciting, quickening, and strengthening it.

7. *Lastly*, The burden of the whole management and conduct of them through the wilderness, till they come to the heavenly Canaan. Great was the burden that Moses had of the people of Israel through the wilderness. How unmanageable did they often prove! But that was a light burden in comparison of that laid on this Prince. He has the burden of all believers through the world on him, in their life and death. Great are their wants, and he has them to supply. Their weakness and follies are innumerable; he has them all to bear and correct. They are broken and shattered ships, often dashed on many rocks, he has them all to bring to land.

Use 1. Of Information. This informs us, that,

1. Jesus Christ is the alone head of his church, and supreme governor thereof; and the headship of it, and supremacy over it, is neither competent to Pope nor any earthly King. It is a burden too heavy for the shoulder of any mortal, and none is fit for it but himself alone. And the government appointed by him in it is not alterable by any power on earth, civil or ecclesiastic.

2. That the interests of the church, the kingdom of Christ, and of every particular believer, the members thereof, will certainly be seen to, and brought to a comfortable account at length. Such a governor must needs make his dominion happy; Matth. xvi. 18, "I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Whatever enemies they have, he is able to master them, and will do it; 1 Cor. xv. 25, "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Whatever wants they have, he is able to supply them, and will do it; Phil. iv. 19, "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Whatever is necessary to make them completely happy, he has purchased, and will confer on them; Psalm lxxxiv. 11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

3. Believers have all reason to be quietly resigned to the divine disposal, and to live by faith in confidence of a blessed issue, whatever be the difficulties they have to grapple with, either in respect of the case of the church, or of their own private case. That holds always sure anchor ground; Isa. lii. 7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth!"

The case of the church is often very low, as now; backslidings are multiplied, iniquity abounds, the Spirit's influences are withdrawn, the disease is proof against all means of cure that can be

used by men. We must in that case table the complaint before the great governor himself, roll it on him, leave it with him, and be going on in our duty; Micah vii. 7, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Psalm cxix. 126, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law."

The believer's own private case may be very difficult, in respect of various afflictions, temptations and trials. But even here, there is a broad foundation for the rest of faith; James i. 2, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." There is not one circumstance in all their case, but it is ordered by the governor, John v. 22, for wise ends; Heb. xii. 10. And it is still under his management, to go or come, increase or decrease precisely according to his order; Matth. viii. 8, 9. And he will turn them all about for good; Rom. viii. 28, as being all medicinal; Isa. xxvii. 9.

Use II. Of Exhortation. Receive him then as your prince and governor, renouncing all other Lords which have had dominion over you; Isa. xxvi. 13. Receive him really as your prince and governor; Matth. xi. 29, "Taking his yoke upon you, and learning of him;" and not in profession only. The most part of this generation do, in their practice, send Christ that message; Luke xix. 14, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" and they will not be governed by him. But,

1*st*, Receive him as your prince, and governor of your life, to walk according to his orders in your whole conversation; and walk no more after your lusts. And,

1. Let his Spirit be your guide and leader; John xvi. 13, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." How long will ye be led with the Spirit of the world, and your own corrupt Spirit? Renounce these, and give up yourselves to be led by his Spirit, or in vain do ye profess Christ to be your Lord and governor; Gal. v. 18, "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." The fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh, speaks you not to be led by the Spirit; ver. 16, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

2. Let his word be your rule; Gal. vi. 16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy," &c. Let that determine you what to do, how to speak, and what and how not. David laid it before him, as the pattern he was to copy after; Psalm cxix. 30, "I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me." But this generation for the most part throw it by, as a thing they have no use for. The way of the world and their own carnal interest, are the rule they walk by.

3. Let his will be the determining point to you. Let your own will be a captive to his; and follow his will, though it should be against the will of all the world. Why will men profess him to be their governor, and will not be swayed by his authority? Luke vi. 46, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

And receive him as governor,

1. Of your hearts and spirits; Prov. xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart." Let the proud heart be made to stoop to him, let the covetous heart be purged by him, and the vain foolish heart be made to find the weight of his awful authority. While Christ has not the government of thy heart, thou hast not given him the throne.

2. Of your tongues. Who governs the lying tongue, the wicked, bitter, and malicious tongue? Not Christ, surely; but the devil. Men that will frame lies, and deliberately tell lies, their tongues are their own, not Christ's. Satan fills their hearts to lie, and they run a risk of being struck down with a lie in their mouth, as Ananias was; Acts v. 3. See Isa. lxiii. 8, "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie."

3. Of your practice. And then ye will have a practice of true piety towards God, and exact justice towards man, Tit. ii. 12. That is what Christ's true subjects will exercise themselves in; Acts xxiv. 16, viz. in "having a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." O the fraud and deceit, the injustice and covetous practices that are to be found with many at this day, speak to them to be under the government of the god of this world, not of Christ.

2*dly*, Receive him as your prince and governor of your lot and condition in the world, resigning the same to his disposal, Psalm xlvii. 4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." And,

1. Be content with the lot carved out for you; Heb. xiii. 5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And be not murmurers and complainers, grudging, repining at, and blaming your lot. That is a sad character, Jude ver. 16, and betrays into many snares. There is nothing in your lot but what the supreme governor sees meet; and where Christ has the government on his shoulders, it is unbecoming and dangerous to be malcontents.

2. Never go out of God's way to mend your condition, nor do the least ill thing to better your circumstances. That is to pull the government of your lot out of Christ's hand, and take it into your own. And ye may be sure ye will have won nothing by it at long-

run; Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If you should gain some worldly profit by it, ye get it, and the curse of it; Zech. v. 4, "I will bring it forth, (viz. the curse), saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof."

3. In all changes of your lot, acknowledge him for direction and guidance; that whatever way you dispose of yourselves, you may have the comfort of being in the way of God; Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." He sets us our stations, and we are not to change but at his direction. Let householders in the change of their dwellings, servants in their change of families, single persons in the change of their lot, and, generally, all in every change of their condition, own the governor.

In all these respects receive Christ as your prince and governor, give up yourselves to his government, surrender and submit yourselves to him. And,

1. Take him for your *only* governor. Renounce all other lords, saying, Isa. xxvi. 13, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." One throne contains not two kings. If ye will have Christ for your Lord, he must have the government of you solely. Let not Satan lord it over you any more, to be led captive at his pleasure. Let not the world be your lord, nor your lusts your lords.

2. Take him for your *absolute* governor. Christ's government is and must be absolute and illimited; for he is essentially just and good, and we are naturally unjust and evil; therefore we can be allowed no hand in determining how he shall govern us; but, without limitation, we must resign the government of ourselves to him, saying with Paul, Acts, ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

3. Take him for your *perpetual* governor, giving up yourselves to his government for ever, Psalm cxix. 112, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end." Some swear allegiance, to him at a time, and, enduring for a while, they afterwards apostatize. But he is a prince of whose kingdom there must be no end.

4. Take him for your prince and governor *presently*, without

delay, Heb. iii. 15, "While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." His royal proclamations are emitted instantly requiring your submission, and he is presented to you as your prince. Delay not, then, a moment longer; the time past may have sufficed to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have subjected yourselves to other lords.

5. *Lastly*, Take him *heartily* and *willingly*. Let your whole souls open to receive this glorious prince; and cordially submit yourselves to his royal sceptre, as a prince whose government will make you happy.

Motive 1. Consider what an excellent prince and governor he is, to whom you are required to submit. The excellencies competent to him as a prince and governor are to be found in none other. He is as far above all the princes of the earth in the excellency of his government, as he is in the dignity of his person.

1. He is perfectly just in his administration, Deut. xxxii. 4. "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." His laws for the government of your life, and your lot, too, are absolutely spotless; and his government, and execution of these laws, are absolutely holy and pure, without the least stain of injustice. Behold his commands, they are most pure, Psalm xix. 8, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;" and that in all points, Psalm cxix. 128, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." His providence is spotless; Psalm cxlv. 17, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." What faults men think they espy therein, are owing to their own blindness.

(2.) He is most wise, infinitely wise; and that wisdom shines forth in the whole of his government; Isa. xxviii. 29, "Wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." His designs are wisely laid, and the means for compassing his designs are wisely managed, so as to prove infallibly successful. The "wheels are full of eyes," Ezek. x. 12. So Isa. xlvi. 10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." So that one may without hesitation absolutely resign himself to his conduct; and so faith makes men do; Heb. xi. 8, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

(3.) He is most vigilant and careful; Zech. iv. 10, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth." Nothing can be a-contriving against any of his subjects by their enemies, far less

can befall them, but he is perfectly apprised of it. There is no surprising of the keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps; and he sees all with his own eyes, which no prince on earth can pretend to.

(4.) He is most tender of his subjects, and of all their interests, his government being exactly calculated for making them truly happy; Rom. viii. 28, "All things work together for good to them that love God." There is such a close connection of their duty and interest, that it is impossible for them to neglect their duty; but as far as they do neglect it, they prove false to their interest. He governs them as a father, with the tender affection that one does his own family, Is. xl. 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

MOTIVE 2. While ye are not under his government, ye are under the government of Satan, Acts xxvi. 18. While this prince governs you not, the prince of darkness doth. And his government, as it is most imperious, so it is most unjust, and destructive of the true interest of souls. He is a cruel lord, and delights in and seeks the misery and ruin of his subjects. We may frame a true notion of his government from his managing of those among whom his power is absolute. What a wretched way does he manage the poor Pagans, the possessed, and those who are in express compact with him? So does he with others, though in a spiritual and covered way.

MOTIVE 3. Jesus Christ is your rightful prince and governor. Satan is an usurper, the throne belongs to Jesus of right. He is so by the irreversible constitution of heaven; Psalm ii. 6, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." He was born a king. Ye were devoted to him in baptism, and as members of his church, ye profess yourselves his subjects, Luke vi. 46.

MOTIVE 3. *Lastly*, If ye submit not to him, he will treat you as rebels, who have broken your faith and allegiance to him, and cast off the yoke of his government. He is presented to you as your lawful prince born; it will be dangerous to refuse him. The day is coming wherein he will judge the world, and behold the end of the rebels against his government; Luke xix. 27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Wherefore consider how other lords have had the dominion over you; the necessity of taking him for your lord and governor; if he be your Saviour, he must be your king, Hos. xiii 9, 10, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help. I will be thy king." Solemnly give up yourselves to him.

## CHRIST'S NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

Here is held out the incomparable excellency of this Prince and Governor presented to us. "His name is called," so the original carries it. "One hath called his name," *i.e.* "His name is called, Wonderful," &c. The connection is, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, on whose shoulder the government is laid, and whose name is called, Wonderful," &c.; so that the scope of this latter part of the text is, to commend the Prince presented to us from his "name," which is here unfolded, to be "a name above every name."

Doctrine. The name of Christ by which he is called, is a name above every name, fit to commend him to the souls of poor sinners.

The name is that which follows in several parts here, viz.: "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Many glorious names are used by the princes of the earth; but there is no name among them all like this. None so high and honourable, none so sweet and lovely, none so adapted to make the subjects happy. Consider here,

I. Who calls him by this name.

II. What his being called by it imports.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. Who calls him by this name? And,

1. His Father has called him by this name, Phil. ii. 9, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." His Father best knows what he is, to give him a name expressive of his nature. And he has, by his spirit in the prophet, given him this glorious one. In effect he proclaimed it; Matt. xvii. 5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. All his people call him by this name, flying to him in their first believing as such a one, and depending on him all along their course of life as such a one.

II. What does his being called by this name import?

1. That he really is what this name bears. God gives no empty titles, nor will empty titles answer the necessities of believers. As his name, so is his nature; the name truly expresses what he is.

2. He manifests himself to be what the name bears. What he is called, he is found to be in the experience of saints.

Use. Study the name of Christ, as represented in the word, so as your souls may be enamoured of him.

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## CHRIST'S NAME WONDERFUL.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*His name shall be called Wonderful.*

Here begins the name of him whom the Father presents and gives to us for our prince. The first syllable of it is "Wonderful."

The word signifies "miracle," a work past reach of the creature's power and skill, or knowledge, and so competent to God alone; Exod. xv. 11, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Psalm lxxvii. 14, "Thou art the God that dost wonders." Every miracle is wonderful, but every wonderful thing is not a miracle. Our Lord Christ is not only a wonderful one, but a miracle, a miraculous one, one most wonderful. He is beyond the creature's comprehension. So that this is fitly made the first syllable of his name, that men may know, that whatever they know of his excellencies, there is still more behind; and though they may apprehend, they cannot comprehend what he is.

Doctrine. Jesus Christ, who is presented and given to us of the Father for our prince, is and appears to be a miraculous one, a most wonderful personage.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall enquire,

I. Under what notion Christ is held forth as a miracle, a miraculous person.

II. What is the import of Christ as God-man his being and appearing to be a miraculous one.

III. In what respects he is so.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply the doctrine.

I. I shall enquire, Under what notion Christ is held forth as a miracle, a miraculous person. Ye have heard already, a miracle is a divine work, and competent to God alone, beyond the reach of any creature. Now, Christ is and appears a miracle. Hence it follows, that he is not so called,

1. In respect of his being a miracle-worker. For it is himself, and not his work, that is here called a miracle. Moreover, the prophets and apostles were miracle-workers, John xiv. 12. Yet this name is above every name, not competent to them, but to him alone.

2. Nor in respect of his divine nature simply, and his eternal generation of the Father. This part of his name does not point him out to us simply as God For besides that that is, by itself, another syllable of his name, "The Mighty God," the scripture, for all that I can discern, doth not warrant us to call him the work of his Father in that respect. And the Father works miracles through the Son by the Spirit; Luke xi. 20, compared with Matt. xii. 28. But the eternal generation of the Son is proper to the Father alone.

3. Nor in respect of his human nature simply. This part of his name does not point him out simply as man neither. For though man is indeed a divine work, yet he is not a work competent to God alone; for the scripture owns man himself to be the father of man's flesh; Heb. xii. 9. But,

4. Christ is held forth as a miracle, a miraculous personage, as God-man in one person. This part of his name points him out to us precisely as our incarnate Redeemer, and is given him precisely in respect of his incarnation. Behold him, God-man, the Word made flesh; and ye behold the miracle, the miraculous person. So the text, "A child, a son, his name Wonderful."

Thus he is a work done or made; John i. 14, "The word was made flesh;" a divine work: Heb. x. 5, "When he cometh into the world, he saith,—A body hast thou prepared me; competent to God alone, as a work of creating power; Jer. xxxi. 22, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man." The Son of God in our nature is a miracle indeed, a work beyond the reach of the creature's capacity. Many miracles had been wrought before the Son of God was incarnate, The sea had been divided, the dead raised, a world created out of nothing, which was more; but a greater miracle than any of these, was the incarnation of the Son of God; after all these had been done, this was the creating of a new thing, never any of the kind before.

Wherefore this is the name of our incarnate Redeemer; and when we hear it named, it must represent to us the Son of God in man's nature.

Use 1. O the love of God to poor sinners of mankind! John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life." The greatest work that ever God did, was for their salvation. He made the world for man, and gave it him, Psalm cxv. 16; and the visible heavens too, Gen. i. 17; (Heb.) yea the highest heavens also he made for them, and gives to them in his Son, Matt xxv. 34. But a greater work than all these he did for them, when he did this miracle of the incarnation of his own Son for them, and gave him, an incarnate Redeemer, to them. O how can we escape the most fearful doom, if we neglect this great salvation! How worthy are they to perish, that will not be saved, when God has wrought this greatest miracle to save them?

2. What unaccountable stupidity is it in men, not to consider, admire, and be swallowed up in contemplation of this miracle; and not to be in deepest love with this miraculous personage given to them? Ah! have we not all been careless, unmoved spectators of this miracle? How many have never spent a few minutes in the consideration and admiration of him? Have ye not gazed on and wondered at some trifle, more than at this greatest of the works of God? Have ye not been more deeply in love with some person or thing for its shadowy excellencies, than with this miraculous person? Cease to wonder at the Jews' obstinacy, in not being moved to believe by all his miracles; for a greater than them all is here, to wit, his miraculous self; and yet we are unmoved.

II. What is the import of Christ as God-man, his being and appearing to be a miraculous, most wonderful one? Considering this as the name of Christ, to commend him to sinners; it imports,

1. The excellency of his person as God-man. He is an excellent, glorious, and lovely one; Heb. i. 3, "Being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Though the blind world perceive not his excellency, saying as Isa. liii. 2, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;" it is not but through their own default, by reason of their blindness; for his glory shines forth, to be perceived by those whose eyes are opened; John i. 14, "We beheld his glory," &c. But the glory of the sun is not seen by the blind man, nor the glory of Christ by unbelievers.

2. The fulness of excellencies in him, our incarnate Redeemer. His name is Miracle, a collective word. There is a confluence of excellencies in him; look to him in every part, and all is excellent in him; Cant. v. 16, "He is altogether lovely." Some excel in one thing, some in another; as Moses in meekness, Samson in strength, Solomon in wisdom: but none but Christ in all. Moses, we would say, was a miracle of meekness, Samson of strength, and Solomon of wisdom. But Christ is miracle all over: meekness, strength,

wisdom, and all other excellencies, meet in him, to a miracle, There is no blemish, no want at all in him; Col. i. 9, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell."

3. The uncommonness and singularity of his excellencies. Miracles are but rare, in respect of the common operations of providence. And Christ among the sons of men is as "a standard-bearer among ten thousand;" Cant v. 10; he is a personage of singular excellencies. It is observed, that what is done by miracle, doth in its kind excel what is the product of nature in that kind. The water that was made wine was far better than the wine of the vine, John ii. 10. So the man Christ is "fairer than the sons of men," Psalm xlv. 2. So every excellency in Christ is beyond that excellency in another; so was Christ's meekness beyond Moses's meekness, his strength beyond Samson's, and his wisdom beyond Solomon's, as the sun's light beyond that of the stars.

4. The absolute matchlessness of his person, for excellency and glory; Prov. viii. 11, "Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." Seek through all the creatures in heaven and earth, and there is none comparable to him; Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." His match is not to be found among all the ranks of created beings.

1. Among created persons, the like to him is not to be found; Jer. xxxi. 22, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man." Consider them in all their excellencies.

(1.) What are men to this miracle of men? Great men are contemptible, wise men fools, good men's goodness disappears, in comparison with him.

(2.) Consider devils in their knowledge and might, the only excellencies remaining with them; and their knowledge is but ignorance in comparison of his, Rev. v. 3, 5; their power weakness, Matt. xii. 29. He can bind them as easily as a giant a little child.

(3.) What are glorified saints, but so many bright stars shining with his borrowed light, wonders of his mercy, monuments of his free love? Rev. iv. 10.

(4.) What are angels that never sinned? They are all his servants, Heb. i. 14, to worship him, verse 6. He is the son of the house, they are but servants of it. He is the Lord of angels. Moses was not content with the offer of an angel, but would have himself; Exod. xxxiii. 15, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence;" nor was Mary content, till she got himself.

2. Among created things his match is not to be found, however men take the shadow for the substance.

(1.) Worldly good things are not comparable to him, in their greatest abundance and choice of them. Riches, honour, strength, &c. are a poor portion in his room and stead; "Prov. viii. 11, "Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it." All of them are greater in expectation than fruition, broken cisterns soon running dry, bitter sweets uncommensurable to the desires of the soul; he the quite reverse.

(2.) Spiritual good things do come from him as rays from the sun. Grace is a created quality, heaven itself is but the place where he keeps his court, And as the prince himself is preferable to all the jewels in his crown, and to his palace; so is Christ above all these.

5. The shining forth of his excellencies, fit to draw all eyes upon him. A miracle is the centre of men's eyes, to which all men are ready to look; it is a sight every one would desire to see, and to see narrowly. There is an attractive beauty and glory in this wonderful one. This is a mystery to the world, who are ready to say, as Cant. v. 9, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" seeing nothing in him to fix their eyes on him. But,

(1.) His Father's eyes are fixed on him, as the object of his good pleasure; Matt. iii. 17, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Lamb is in the midst of the throne above, Rev. v. 6. It is a strange word that is said of the temple; 2 Chron. vii. 16, "For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." But a greater than the temple is meant there. The eyes of the Holy Spirit are on him; Zech. iii. 9, "Behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of Hosts." Compared with Rev. v. 6, "In the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

(2.) The eyes of the angels are drawn after him, as a most wonderful sight. The faces of the cherubims were therefore made looking towards the mercy-seat; Exod. xxv. 20, to teach us, that Christ the Mediator, reconciling God and sinners, is the object of the angel's wonder; 1 Peter i. 12, "Which things the angels desire to look into."

(3.) The eyes of all the saints are drawn after him, as the object of their admiration and affection. No sooner are the eyes of the blind soul opened, but they fix on him; John iv. 10, "If thou

knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Therefore faith is called a "looking unto Christ;" Isa. xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Cant. iii. 11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon," &c. And it is not a looking after a wonder of a few days; but it must remain all along their course through the world; Heb. xii. 1, 2, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." And when they come to glory, they will fix their eyes on him for ever, never weary, but always refreshed with the sight. Therefore "the Lamb is in the midst of the elders," Rev. v. 6; "and the multitude before the Lamb," chap. vii. 9.

And that the eyes of all men are not upon him, is because they know him not, are not capable to discern his glory; Psalm ix. 10, "And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee."

6. *Lastly*, The incomprehensibleness of him to any creature. He is a miracle past their reach, the reach of their knowledge as well as their power; Eph. iii. 19, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Men are soon non-plussed in the works of nature; there are things there which they cannot comprehend; Job xxxviii. and xxxix., as in the wind that bloweth; John iii. 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." Eccl. xi. 5, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." How much more must they find themselves at a loss in miracles, where the laws of nature are neglected, and God works quite beyond them? Then how must they be quite lost in this great miracle: the Son of God become man? Agur long ago challenged the wit of all mankind to comprehend his name; Prov. xxx. 4, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" And the Son of God himself declared his name to be past reach; Judges xiii. 18, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" Whatever the saints know of it, the half is not known, there is still more behind.

Use I. Whosoever do truly discern what Christ is, cannot choose but to love him above all persons and things, and choose him for their portion being offered to them; "Psalm ix. 10, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." John iv. 10, "If thou

knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." His matchless excellencies make him such a lovely one, that the discovery of them does command the surrender of the heart to him, and captivates the affections; sinks the value of all created things in competition with him, and enthrones him in the heart; Phil. iii. 8, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Hence true believers can neither be boasted nor bribed, frightened nor flattered from his love; Cant. viii. 6, 7, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

2. Believers' love to Christ must needs be lasting, everlasting, for his excellencies are infinite and incomprehensible. When we meet with an object among the creatures that commands our admiration and love, we are taken with it; but some defect comes afterwards to be perceived in it, and then the admiration ceaseth, or turns into contempt. At least, the perfections of the object are all seen through, and they become familiar, and the admiration dwindles away into nothing; and what was at first sight admired as new, ceaseth to be so when it affords no more new. But no defect or blemish can ever be espied in him, who is fairer than the sun; and there being an incomprehensible depth of excellencies in him, there is ever place for new discoveries; so the admiration must be kept up for ever; Rev. xxii. 2, "In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

3. Those whose greatest admiration and supreme love Christ is not the object of, are yet certainly in the midnight darkness of their natural state. Whosoever of you admire and love any created person or thing as much or more than Christ, ye have never yet seen nor known him; Psalm ix. 10, "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." The predominant love of the world, prizing and esteeming the things thereof above him, is a concluding evidence, that ye

are walking in the dark, that the scales are yet on your eyes, and that Christ is a vailed Christ to you.

4. *Lastly*, See here how it is not to be thought strange, that there are who stumble at the doctrine of an incarnate God our redeemer. Corrupt nature is blind and venturous. Our incarnate Redeemer is a miracle, past the reach and comprehension of the creatures. They are blind, and cannot apprehend his glory; yet they are proud and lofty, and will not admit the mystery, because they cannot comprehend it. Now, it cannot be comprehended; therefore either they must be humbled, or stumble at it as a stumbling stone. See Matt. xi. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 6—8.

III. In what respects is our incarnate Redeemer a miraculous one, a most wonderful personage? This is a subject which no man can fully comprehend, and will never be exhausted by the saints in glory through eternity. We will touch on a few things to show that he is miracle all over. He is wonderful,

1*st*, In his person and natures. He is God-man, God and man in one person. None such in heaven or earth.

1. The man Christ is the true God, the second person of the glorious Trinity, the one supreme most high God, with the Father and the Spirit; 1 John v. 20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." He is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 2, 3. Therefore he said to Philip, John xiv. 9, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." He is the Father's fellow, Zech. xiii. 7; his equal, Phil. ii. 6.

2. Christ the Son of God is true man. The eternal Son of the Father is a Son of Adam; Luke iii. 23—38, being, as was supposed, "the son of Joseph, which was the son of Adam." He was really human flesh; John i. 14, "The Word was made flesh;" and our flesh, as "made of a woman," Gal. iv. 4. He is a man, consisting of a soul; Matth. xxvi. 38, and a body of flesh, and blood, and bones; Luke xxiv. 39; as really man as any man whatsoever.

So he is God and man in one person. Here is a wonderful person indeed, whom we cannot comprehend; true God, yet man; true man, yet God; a mysterious person, undiscerned by most that saw him with their eyes, perceived only by the enlightened eye; John i. 14. The uniting of a soul to an earthly body, forming one person called man, was a work of wonder; but what is the putting together of two pieces of clay, in comparison of the Potter's uniting with his

own clay? Should we behold an angel assuming to himself and appearing in a crawling worm, as his own body; we would cease to wonder at it, beholding this surpassing wonder, an incarnate God! Here eternity and a being of yesterday meet together in one person, a child, and yet the Everlasting Father; here infinite and finite meet in one; God and his own creature!

2*dly*, In his perfections and qualifications; Psalm xlv. 2, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; "grace is poured into thy lips." All qualities that render one desirable and lovely meet together in him; and all these are in him to a miraculous pitch. So his Father is well-pleased in him, Matth. iii. 17; and the Spirit rested on him, ver. 16. And every soul beholding him with an eye of faith, will take up its eternal rest in him. Particularly he is wonderful,

1. In his spotless and unchangeable holiness and purity; Heb. vii. 26, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." The fulness of the Spirit of holiness is in him; John iii. 34, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." The brightest of the saints here below want not their spots; at best they are but fair as the moon; but there is no darkness in him at all. The saints and angels in heaven have but each one their measure of holiness, the fulness of a vessel; they have none to communicate to others; but in him there is the fulness of a fountain, to fill all with holiness; John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

2. In his wisdom; Col. ii. 3, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The least portion and the greatest that any have of it in the world, is from him; John i. 9, "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The apostle challenges the whole world with that; Rom. xi. 34, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" But his name is the Counsellor, and he hath known the mind of his Father; Matth. xi. 27, and can open the sealed book, and look into the secrets there. O the admirable wisdom of Christ, appearing all along in the conduct of his providence in the church and in the world, whereby men and devils are outwitted!

3. In his power. There is nothing too hard for him to do. What astonishing works of power did he while he was in the world! Matt. xi. 5, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." And he is the beginning of the creation of God; Heb. i. 2. How often has the song of victory been raised in the church to his praise! Psalm xcviii. 1, "O,

sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand, and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." His triumphing over death, devils, hell, and the grave, are lasting monuments of his power.

4. In his goodness, mercy, and grace. The Prince of the kings of the earth is the Prince of peace. There is grace in his lips, whereby he speaks to poor sinners; Psalm xlv. 2, "Grace is poured into thy lips." Though he has power sufficient to strike terror into the stoutest of his enemies, yet he is a matchless mirror of goodness, patience, and meekness.

5. *Lastly*, In a word, He is wonderful in the concentering of all perfections in him, each in its perfection; Cant. v. 16, "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely."

3*dly*, He is wonderful all along in his duration. Some are wonderful in one part of their life, some in another; but he is miracle all over his duration. And particularly he is wonderful,

1. In his eternal generation of the Father; Psalm ii. 7, "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." He was before he was born; John viii. 58, "And Jesus said to them; Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." He was in the beginning of time; John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word;" before time, from everlasting; Prov. viii. 22, 23, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." See Micah v. 2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Wonderful One! A Son, and yet from eternity, without beginning of days Heb. vii. 3. A Son, and yet his duration of equal extent with his Father's. An incomprehensible One! Who can comprehend this his generation? Begotten from eternity! The same numerical divine essence communicated from the Father to him!

2. In his birth; Matth. i. 23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us." Adam's body was made of the dust, without help of man or woman; Eve of Adam's without the help of a woman; before the laws of generation took place. But after they took place, and had gone on uninterrupted for four thousand years, Christ was conceived of a virgin, without the help of a man, Heb. vii. 3. This was a miracle, a wonderful birth, incomprehensible to us; Luke i. 35, "The angel said unto Mary, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the

power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

3. In his life. In his private life, a wonderful infant, lying in a manger, yet worshipped as God; Herod set to kill him, yet he preserved, while the several babes about were slain, that he might not be missed! A wonderful child, ruling the whole world; yet subject to Joseph and his mother. A wonderful youth, engaging the doctors at twelve years of age, having never learned, John vii. 15. His public life was one continued wonder, in his temptations, preachings, and miracles, especially in the untainted holiness which ran through his whole life; never a wrong action, word, nor thought, notwithstanding of all he suffered from an ungrateful world.

4. In his death. Betrayed by one of his own; forsaken by them all; acquitted by his judge as innocent, yet condemned to a most cruel death. Astonishing wonder, God dying in man's nature! the beloved Son of God hanging on a cross; heaven, earth, and hell, all pouring in at once floods of suffering on him: but he in the meantime wholly resigned, and patient to a miracle under all; taking the bitter cup of wrath kindly out of his Father's hand, and maintaining his confidence in him, praying for men his enemies, and triumphing over devils on the cross. Cease to wonder at men's laying down their life for their friends; at Samson's dying with the Philistines. A greater wonder is here. The sun had never seen such a wonder, and was struck blind with the sight, and death, astonished, let go its prisoners.

5. In his burial. The Lord of life lying down dead in a grave; the spotless Jesus making his grave with the wicked; the great deliverer from death carried prisoner to its dark regions; is a wonder that may hold us in admiration for ever! The beautiful fabric of heaven and earth pulled down, heavens rolled up and cast by like old rags, would be no such wonder, as the Christ of God laid down in a grave, and the powers of hell seeming so to have carried the day against him.

6. In his resurrection. Behold him dead and buried, a rock the walls of his grave, closed up with a huge stone, the stone sealed, a guard of soldiers set to watch there; and so for two days the wicked world and hell triumphing over him; but all of a sudden, on the third day, the earth and rocks fall a-quaking and shaking; an angel rolls away the stone; the guards become as dead men; death itself loses its gripes of him; the bands of all the elect's guilt, wherewith it held him, become as tow touched with the fire; and the slain Redeemer rises again, and comes forth; stands conqueror on the field of battle, laden with the spoils of his enemies, death and hell; bringing away the keys of them with him.

7. In his ascension into heaven. Behold him ascending into heaven from the earth, where he stood with his disciples; making his way through the air upward, they looking on, till a cloud received him out of their sight, Acts i. 9, being carried up into heaven, Luke xxiv. 51. Then he was returning conqueror from the battle unto his Father's palace; and he is attended in his triumphal chariot with his captives; Psalm lxviii. 18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive;" and with joyful acclamations and sound of trumpet; Psalm xlvii. 5, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." Behold how he is admired by those of the upper house, while he is coming towards them, as a most wonderful one; Isa. lxiii. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strengh? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Then he enters the gates, and sets them open for all his people to follow.

8. In his sitting at the right hand of God, Heb. i. 3. When the man Christ came into the highest heavens, his Father seated him at his right hand, Psalm cx. 1. The most favourite angel never had at any time such an honour put upon him, as this most wonderful man was fixed in, at his first arrival in the upper house, Heb. i. 13. There he sat, there he sits, and there he will sit, in a state of glory, rest, and expectation of his enemies becoming his footstool, till the mystery of God be finished.

9. In his coming again to judge the world, 2 Thess. i. 7—10. What tongue can express, or heart conceive the wonders that shall then take place about him? The attendance of all the holy angels on him as the Judge, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, the resurrection of all the dead at his coming, their compearance before him, the separating of the sheep from the goats, the sentencing of both, driving the wicked away into hell, and taking the righteous along with him to heaven, will shew him wonderful at that day to those who now see no glory in him.

10. *Lastly*, In his continuing for ever to be the eternal band of union, and mean of communion, between God and the saints for ever; Rev. vii. 17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Every saint shall shine there as a star in the firmament; but he is the Sun for ever, from whom they shall derive all their light and glory; Rev. xxi. 23, "And the city had no need of the sun,

neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." If they are to be as the seven lamps in the temple above, he is and will be as the bowl in the candlestick from which they will all be fed; he only immediately communicating with the Godhead.

4*thly*, He is wonderful in his offices. And,

1. In his prophetical office. How would men run together to see a prophet of the Lord; how would they admire him? But he is the great prophet, never was there such a one as he. The Spirit came at the times on the Prophets, but he rested on him; Isa. xi. 2. They had their foreknowledge of future events at second hand; but it is his privilege to look with his own eyes into the sealed book; John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." All that they could do, was to teach externally; but he can render his teaching effectual, and that on the weakest and foolishest creatures that are. Hence he hath chosen the foolish things of the world. So we may conclude, Job xxxvi. 22, "Behold, God exalteth by his power; who teacheth like him?"

2. In his priestly office. The priests under the law had their altars of stone, or brass, or gold; their sacrifices of beasts, their offerings of divers sorts. But here is a most wonderful Priest; who is the priest, the altar, and the sacrifice, all in one. He offered himself a sacrifice unto God; and from himself was the sacrifice rendered acceptable. All the sacrifices offered before his, were but as handwritings to own the debt of sin; but could pay none. His sacrifice was truly expiatory, purchased the Spirit, reconciliation with God, and eternal life for sinners. Never was there such a priest nor sacrifice. And he is the great Intercessor, wonderful in respect of the ground of his intercession, the objects of it, the manner of it, and the infallible success of it continually.

3. In his kingly office. Such a wonderful King the world never saw, among all the crowned heads that ever were on it. Zion's King is most wonderful in his victories, rescuing men from the power of the devil, subduing their hearts to him, and conquering their wills; in his defence of his subjects, from the devil, the world, lusts, frowns, and flatteries of the world; in ruining his enemies totally, and completing the happiness of his friends. Christ's kingdom is the most ancient kingdom, being erected on the sixth day of the creation; the most extensive kingdom, reaching both heaven and earth. Never a kingdom had so many enemies and so potent; yet has it stood through all ages, and will stand for ever and ever, without end.

5*thly*, He is wonderful in his relations. And,

1. He is nearly related to the house of heaven, and so has the highest possible relation. The monarchs of the earth are the creatures of God, the angels are the servants of the house of heaven; but Christ is the Son of that house, the Son of God, Heb. i. 5; and has the management of it all in his hand, John v. 22.

2. He is nearly related to the house of Adam. He is a Son of that house too, the top-branch of it; Luke iii. 3, 8. He has a common relation to them all. He is their Saviour by office; 1 Tim. iv. 10; the Saviour of the world; 1 John iv. 14. He has a nearer relation to the elect. He is their surety and representative, who undertook for them in the covenant; Heb. vii. 22, John x. 15; and a yet nearer relation to believers. He is their brother; Heb. ii. 11; their father, Isa. ix. 6; their husband, 2 Cor. xi. 2; and their head, Col i. 18. And thus by his relation to both,

3. He is the centre of union to the two. In him they meet; John xvii. 2, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." There was war declared between the two houses; and the house of Adam could never have made their part good against Heaven; but the Son of God married our nature to himself, and so brings together the two houses, making peace through the body of his flesh. So, as he is the foundation-stone, on which all believers are laid; he is the corner-stone, joining and knitting heaven and earth.

*6th Lastly*, He is wonderful in his love; Eph. iii. 18, 19, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," viz. his love to the children of men. His love will appear wonderful, if ye consider,

1. The subject of it, the party loving us. He is the eternal Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth. That ever there should have been an eye of love cast from heaven on us, not from among the courtiers, but from the throne, the King himself, is wonderful. That the Father's delight should have made the sons of men his delight, Prov. viii. 30, 31, may cause us to cry out, Psalm cxliv. 3, "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?"

2. The objects of it, the parties beloved; men, sinful men. Consider them as to their rank of being, and they are the lowest of the rational creatures; but a superior rank, viz., angels, were passed over, and they were made the objects of it; Tit. iii. 4, "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." Consider them as to their quality, and they were enemies to him; Rom. 5. 10, "For when they were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

3. The effect, force and energy of this love. It is absolutely matchless; never did any love work so powerfully as his. It began (if I may so say) before the world was; Prov. viii. 31; and engaged him in suretyship for the debt of an elect world. In time he died for them, he so loved them, Rom. v. 8. It rests not till he have them with himself in the highest heavens, John xvii. 24, for ever.

4, *Lastly*, The qualities of it. These are wonderful.

(1.) It is free love; Hos. xiv. 4, "I will love them freely." There was nothing in the object lovely, to engage it. But as the sun shines without hire on the dunghill, as well as on the bed of roses; so Christ's love was unhired. See the freeness of it, Ezek. xvi. 8, "When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine."

(2.) It is sovereign love. There were objects equally miserable with fallen man; yet there was no love to them. Christ looked on the fallen part of the creation, and the angelic tribe, and the human tribe, were both before him; and sovereignty passes the former, but fixes the love on the latter.

(3.) It is preventing love; John xv. 16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Love begets love, as one coal kindles another. But Christ's love to us had nothing from us of that kind, nor of any other, to kindle it. We never love him, till he love us first; 1 John iv. 19.

(4.) It is tender love; Isa. xl. 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." It is tender as of a father to his children; Psalm ciii. 13, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" as of a mother to her sucking child; Isa. xlix. 15, 16, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." It is tender, as one is to the apple of his eye; Zech. ii. 8, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye."

(5.) It is unchangeable love; John xiii. 1, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2 Tim. ii. 19, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." Whatever falls out in the course of the believer's lot and life, though the manifestations of that love may be very variable, yet the love itself never alters. See Hos. ii. 19, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

(6.) *Lastly*, It is everlasting love. It never had a beginning, and will never have an end; Jer. xxxi. 3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

And thus Christ appears to be all over wonderful.

USE 1. For Information. See here,

1. The greatness of the Father's love in giving to us such a wonderful one for our Prince; John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. The love of God appears here to a wonder. O what honour is put upon man, by making such a gift to him, than which Heaven could not give a greater! O what happiness appears to be designed for man by this gift! We may say, as Hiram King of Tyre said to Solomon, 2 Chron. ii. 11, "Because the Lord hath loved his people; he hath made thee king over them."

2. The reasonableness of the believer's superlative love to Christ. Every believing soul loves Christ above all persons and all things. They will love him more than all the world, and all that is therein, and more than their own life; Luke xiv. 26. And good reason there is for it; for there is no object so lovely. If we look to confessors parting with their goods, their liberty, and their worldly comforts, for Christ, to the martyrs parting with their lives, embracing fires, gibbets, &c., the most cruel deaths for Christ, we will cease to wonder at their so doing, when we consider what a wonderful One he is for whom they undergo the loss of all. Gaining Christ, they are the greatest gainers, whatever they lose; Phil. iii. 7, 8.

3. The reasonableness of the gospel-demand of all to receive and submit to Christ as their Prince and Governor. His transcendent excellency entitles him to the principality and government over the sons of men. His merit requires our absolute resignation to him. He is the Father's choice; and in making that choice, he has acted like himself, having chosen for us this most wonderful personage.

4. *Lastly*, The dreadful sin and danger of the slighting of Christ. The more wonderful and excellent he is, the deeper will the guilt be of refusing him; the deeper the guilt, the more fearful will be the vengeance for rejecting him; Heb. ii. 3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

USE 2. Of Exhortation. Be exhorted then to give this wonderful one your heart; Prov. xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart." And,

1. Make him the choice of your soul, saying, Psalm. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Take him for your portion, as one who is the best of portions. Let your souls solemnly consent to the gospel-offer.

2. Part with all for him, as the wise merchant, who sold all that he had, and bought the one pearl of great price, Matth. xiii. 44, 45. Give up with your lusts and idols; renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, resting on Christ for all, for time and eternity.

3. Dwell in the contemplation of his matchless excellencies. Let it be the substance of your religion to love him, to admire him, to be swallowed up in his love. And let love to him set your souls a-moving in all holy obedience.

Motive 1. Ye can never bestow your hearts so well. What is all the world in comparison of Christ, but loss and dung? Alas! that shadows should have our hearts, while the most substantial good courts it.

Motive 2. Consider that it is for this end Christ is commended to you. We preach Christ, that ye may fall in love with him.

Motive 3. *Lastly*, Consider how ye will answer it to him before the tribunal, that ye have preferred other lovers to the lovely one.

## CHRIST THE COUNSELLOR.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*His Name shall be called—Counsellor.*

The scope of this part of the verse being to commend the Prince presented and given to us for our Prince and Governor, this syllable of his name refers to his singular capacity for management of matters, in respect of his vast reach in point of wisdom. Other princes must have their counsellors, by whose advice they may act: but he himself is, and shews himself to be Counsellor, an oracle of government, a Prince in whose own breast is the oracle for right management of all things relating to his dominion.

Doctrine. Jesus Christ, who is presented and given to us of the Father for our Prince, is and shews himself to be the great Counsellor, an oracle of government.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. In what respects Christ is the Counsellor.

II. What is the import of this part of his name.

III. *Lastly*, Improve the subject.

I. In what respects is Christ the Counsellor.

1*st*, He is of the secret council of Heaven; Zech. vi. 13, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." He is a member of

the cabinet-council of Heaven, to which the most favourite angel is not admitted. He has access to the sealed book of the divine decrees; Rev. v. 5; and there is nothing transacted there, nor has been from eternity, but what he is acquainted with; John v. 20, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth." With his Father and the Spirit he is of the council.

2*dly*, He is the oracle of counsel for the earth; John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Matth. xi. 27, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Many counsellors are to be found in the earth; and wicked counsellors for men's destruction, as the house of Ahab were counsellors to Ahaziah, King of Judah, to his destruction, 2 Chron. xxii. 4. But he is the Counsellor for salvation, outshining all other good counsellors, as the sun doth the twinkling stars. And,

1. He is the Counsellor of the world of men; John viii. 12, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." They have all lost their way, their affairs are all in confusion, they know not how to right them. But he is,

(1.) Their Counsellor in respect of office. As the sun is set in the firmament to give light on the earth, so is Christ given for a light to the world, that whosoever will, may have his counsel, and by his counsel get the affairs of their souls retrieved; John xii. 46, "I am, come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." Whoever will consult him, are welcome; none shall be refused his wise counsel; John vi. 37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

(2.) Their Counsellor in respect of capacity, Col. ii. 3, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The multitude and variety of their cases cannot confuse him; for his understanding is infinite. Nothing can perplex him, who with one glance of his piercing eye, sees at once through all cases of all men, and can prescribe suitable remedies.

2. He is the Counsellor of the visible church more especially, Micah iv 9, and that in two respects.

(1.) He consults her interest, for her protection and preservation in the world; Micah iv. 9, "Why dost thou cry out aloud; is there no king in the; is thy counsellor perished." There are constant conspiracies of devils and wicked men to ruin her; and ofttimes their plots are laid so subtilly, and so powerfully managed, as that

the church is brought to the brink of ruin; but he, as her Counsellor, discovers the snare, and powerfully counteracts her enemies; so that she is still preserved. A remarkable instance of which we have in the conspiracy of Haman to destroy the whole nation of the Jews, the history of which you may read in the book of Esther.

(2.) He is still actually counselling her by his word. And her members have the advantage of Heaven's counsels, inculcated on them for their spiritual welfare. The counsel of God in providing a Saviour, is proclaimed there; the salvation is offered, and they are counselled again and again to embrace it; their way to happiness is cleared; Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see."

3. He is the Counsellor of the invisible church, of believers, and of every particular believer in it, Eph. i. 22, and that most especially. And,

(1.) The care and management of all and every one of them lies on him; 1 Peter. v. 7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." He is the great Shepherd who brings in the sheep from their straying, feeds and protects them, and at length completes the well-being. To him the Father has committed the charge of all the elect; and on him it lies to bring them into himself in conversion, to manage them during their stay in the world, and to bring them all safe to glory in the end.

(2.) He counsels them effectually, by his word and Spirit, Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." He has established a communication between him and them, whereby they have his direction and instruction in their particular cases, what way to steer their course. Prov. iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." He is their oracle, whom they are to consult in all things; and his word bears his counsel to them; Psalm cxix. 24, "Thy testimonies also are my counsellors;" his providence points out their way; Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye;" and his Spirit makes all effectual; John xvi. 13, "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

II. What is the import of this part of Christ's name? We may take it up in these seven particulars following.

*First*, He is of singular wisdom for conduct and management of affairs, Isa. xi. 2, 3, "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and

might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." Great is the truth committed to him, in bringing an elect world to glory; but he has a head sufficient for the difficult task, which would be too hard for the skill of angels to manage. Nothing can be so intricate for him, but his wisdom can unfold it. For,

1. The fulness of the Spirit of wisdom is lodged in him, to fit him for the great trust of bringing many sons to glory, Isa. xi. 2, forecited; and that not by measure, as saints have the same; but without measure, to fit him for every emergency in the case of his trust; so that he can never be at a loss to know what to do; John iii. 34, "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" being furnished with wisdom, as the spring with waters continually.

2. He is wisdom itself, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father; under which name Solomon speaks of him, Prov. viii. And Christ's children are wisdom's children, Matth. xi. 19.

Use. 1. How fit and suitable is Christ for us then, to conduct us through an evil world, to the place of perfect safety? We live in a deceitful world, where we are environed with snares; how will we ever make our way through it? Let us betake ourselves then to the great Counsellor for conduct, the deceit of the world prompting us to go to him.

2. Put your case in his hand, and trust him with it, how intricate and perplexed soever it is. Though you cannot give a name to it, he can; though you can find no remedy for it in the whole creation; but all says, "It is not in me;" the wisdom of the Counsellor will reach it.

3. See how weak and foolish things fall on and keep the way to happiness, while worldly wise men are bemisted and bewildered, that they never reach it, Isa. xxv. 8, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools shall not err therein." The Counsellor is on their head, ver. 4; while those slighting him lean to their own understanding, and so wander; Eccles. x. 15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

*Secondly*, He is a prince of great and noble designs and projects, requiring counsel and wisdom. All the designs and projects of the princes of the earth are but trifles, and childish in comparison of his; they are quite too high for creatures of the deepest reach, 1 Cor. ii. 9. We may take them up in these three.

1. He entertained, and has accomplished a design of ransoming an elect world, and so became their Redeemer; 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." This was such a high design, that no man whatsoever was able to have fallen on a method of ransoming one of them; Psalm xlix. 7, 8, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." Silver and gold could not effect it; it behoved to be by blood; that blood behoved to be of infinite value. So the great Counsellor falls on a method to effect it, his own incarnation; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without blemish and without spot."

2. He has been, and is on a project of rescuing one and all of them from the power of the devil; John x. 16, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." This is a difficult task; all the wit and power of hell is engaged against it; and what is favourable on Satan's side, is, that he is in possession; they are his captives, prisoners and slaves; and they themselves side with him against Christ, being unwilling to be rescued. Yet the Counsellor will not give over the project; but as he has hitherto, so he will to the end carry it on, till there is not one of them all left unrescued; John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

3. He is on a design to have them all together at home with himself in his Father's house, in a state of complete happiness, John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." There are mountains of difficulties lying in the way of this project; but the wisdom of the Counsellor will find a way to roll them all away. This is the building of the temple of the Lord which he has in view, Zech. vi. 12; and will perfect over the belly of all difficulties; Zech. iv. 7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." For effecting this, there are to be rolled away mountains of difficulties casting up in their case.

(1.) Before death. Their passage through the wilderness is difficult, through their manifold wants, weaknesses, snares and tempta-

tions there, that if they were not under the wise conduct of the great Counsellor, it would be impossible they could miss their carcases falling there; but he will have all safe through; Psalm lxxiii. 24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

(2.) In death. It is hard to get safe through the dark valley; but he will have them safe there, where many split, and are broken in pieces. Be the voyage never so dangerous, he will be their pilot; Psalm xxiii. 4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Be the way never so much haunted by instruments of destruction, he will carry them safely through; Isa. xxxv. 9, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there."

(3.) In the grave. There their bodies lie, when they leave this world, under the power of death. The bands of death wherewith they are held there, are mighty; the bars of the grave cannot be broken in sunder by created power; but he designs to loose the one, and break the other; Hos. xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

Use 1. Let us then, each for himself, fall in with the noble and great designs of this prince. Satan, the prince of this world, is carrying on designs of destruction; and men fall in with his designs, pursuing their worldly interest as their chief interest, and going on impenitent in their sins. Christ's designs are designs of salvation; fall in with these, seeking chiefly the advancing of your eternal interest, Matth. vi. 33, repenting, and turning every one from his evil way.

2. Let us be concerned for the prospering of his counsels; Psalm lxxii. 15, "Prayer shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised." Compare Matth. vi. 10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Satan and his agents are engaged against them, and counteract them all they can; stand not unconcerned spectators; for neutrals in this case are enemies to Christ; Matth. xii. 30, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Rejoice in the prospering of his kingdom, and mourn for the dishonours done to him.

3. They that reject and oppose his counsels, are fools, and do it to their own loss and hurt; Luke vii. 30. For all his counsels are

great and noble; and whoso set themselves against them, work for their own ruin; Prov. viii. 36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." They must perish without remedy, rejecting the counsels of salvation.

*Thirdly*, He can manage all by himself, and needs no counsel of men, the name of the wisest on earth, may be *Consultor*; the wisest of men says so; Prov. xi. 14, "Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." But his name is counsellor. He is so far a Counseller, that he is a *Consultor* of none; Rom. xi. 34, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" His servants are about his throne, but not to pretend to give him counsel. Consider,

1. His understanding is infinite. He sees all things at once, and he sees through every thing; whereas the creature's capacity is but finite, seeing but some things, and but some parts of them too. There can then be no lack of counsel in him; and if there were, we would be utterly unfit to make it up. Can the light of a small candle increase the light of the shining sun, or a drop from one's finger the waters of the ocean? Far less can finite add to what is infinite.

2. His counsels were all concerted before we had a being. The plan and method of his government, in every part, was laid down immutably, before there was a man or angel. He hath not councils of yesterday, wherein we might give advice; but "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts xv. 18. The elect were chosen to the kingdom from eternity, Eph. i. 4; and the kingdom prepared for them, Matth. xxv. 34; and all the dispensations of his providence immutably laid down, Zech. vi. 1.

3. The execution of them was begun entirely without us. What a sweet surprise was the conduct of the great Counsellor to our guilty first parents in paradise? Did he consult with the guilty pair, how to remedy their case? No; but he surprised them with his counsel. He made us without us at first; and he re-makes us, not only without us, but over the belly of opposition from us, therefore he can manage us without us, both in nature and grace.

4. How often have we seen, that our counsels, had they been mixed with those of the great Counsellor, would have marred all? David would have the child to live, but the great Counsellor would have him to die; for had he lived, he had lived to the reproach of David. Jacob says, "All these things were against him;" yet were they for him; so that if they had not taken place, his family had been in ill case.

Use 1. Let us therefore wholly resign the disposal of our lot to Jesus Christ the great Counsellor; Psalm xlvii. 4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." Let us not carve for ourselves, but leave that to him; believing that to be best for us, which he sees best. First commit your souls to him for eternal salvation, and then put a blank into his hand as to all other concerns. If we are his children, let our Father dispose of us; if his subjects, let our King rule us. "The Father has committed all judgment to the Son," John v. 22. Let not us refuse for our part.

2. Let us wait on him patiently in the way of his dispensation towards ourselves, and towards the church; Isa. xxvi. 8. The church of God, and the interest of religion, are at a very low pass at this day; we are rowed into deep waters, from which no human skill can row us out again. But Christ is the great Counsellor; let him alone; he will see to his own work, and will awake as a giant refreshed with wine. Are we in depths of affliction, trials, and difficulties? The storm is never so boisterous, nor the passage so hazardous, as the pilot Christ needs to call a council what to do.

3. Let us beware of murmuring and fretting at, and quarrelling his conduct. There may be pieces of it which we cannot account for; but there is nothing in it that is wrong, Deut. xxxii. 4. Though we cannot see how all is well that he does, let us believe that he does all well, Jer. xii. 1. Murmuring is a charging of the great Councillor foolishly, as if he were not wise enough for to manage us; and that we might pretend to direct him. Remember his name, and be silent, and satisfied in all his disposals.

*Fourthly*, His manner of conduct, and method of management, is deep and uncommon. Solomon tells us, that "counsel in the heart of man is like deep waters," Prov. xx. 5. Christ's name is Counsellor, pointing out his counsels as great deeps; and so they are; Psalm xcii. 5, "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." The contrivances of the greatest wits among men, are but thin and shallow, in comparison of the way of the great Counsellor; Psalm lxxvii. 19, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

1. It is not easily seen into. His way in his conduct of matters is truly mysterious; there is need of wisdom to discern it; Psalm cvii. 43, and carnal wisdom will not do it; 1 Cor. ii. 14, "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they

are spiritually discerned." Earthly princes have their secrets of government; and therefore no wonder that Christ has his secrets of government, who is the great Counsellor. It is such a deep, and so hard to be seen into, that,

(1.) Carnal, unrenewed men make wretched blunders about it, and quite mistake it. They cannot at all see into the mystery; it is as a parable to them that they cannot understand, Mark iv. 11. They are none of the king's friends, and they cannot penetrate into his counsels, nor find out his designs, in his dispensations; Psalm xcii. 5—7, "O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." Yea, they quite mistake the matter to their own destruction; Mal. iii. 14, 15, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness, are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Hos. xiv. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

(2.) Even the godly themselves are often mightily puzzled and perplexed about it, they know not what to make of it. How was Asaph plunged in the case of the prosperity of the wicked, and adversity of the godly? He was brought to the borders of Atheism by it. And there was no recovering, till he gave over looking with the eye of carnal wisdom, and looked with the eye of faith, Psalm lxxiii. 12, &c.

2. His manner of conduct, and method of management, is not to be seen through while we are here, by any whatsoever; Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Even those who see into his conduct, cannot see through it. There are many plies of the manifold wisdom of God that they cannot unfold; but will remain hid till the light of glory do discover them. By faith we may see so far as to say, "He does all things well." But when the whole web of providence being cut out, is laid before the saints in the light of the upper house, they will doubtless discern a great deal of beauties therein, which they do not now see. For a swatch of these depths, you may take these.

1. Things let go on to the utmost point of hopelessness, before a

hand is put to, to work the delivery. This is not the manner of men, whose maxim is, to withstand the beginnings, before the disease grows desperate:

> Principiis obsta: sero medicina paratur,
> Cum longa per moras invaluere mala.

But nothing is more ordinary in the conduct of the great counsellor, than to let things go on to the utmost extremity, and then to take the opportunity; Deut. xxxii. 36, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." The chief thing in the dispensation was about himself; before he was delivered, he was dead, and buried, the stone sealed, the watch set, he lying still so long in the grave; and after that pattern, the greatest deliverances his church or any believer gets, is wrought, as in the case of Joseph.

2. The prince's friends treated like enemies, and his enemies treated like friends. Solomon observes it; Eccl. viii. 14, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." This is not the way of men neither, to caress their enemies, and heap favours on them; and to pinch, and lay their hand heavy on their friends. But this is one of the counsellor's depths of management. The ungrateful butler is at court in favour, but Joseph in the dungeon; waters of a full cup wrung out to the ungodly, but godly Asaph plagued every day; Herodias dancing and making merry, but John Baptist's head struck off in a prison.

3. The most unlikely instruments and means chosen, and the most promising laid by. This is not the way of men neither, who choose what bids fairest for the purpose; but it is the way of the counsellor. When the people choose a king, he was one that was the most stately man among them; but not so was the counsellor's choice, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. Cain was rejected, and Abel accepted. Sarah, who had no procreative faculty, is chosen, when wasted and worn with age, to be the mother of the seed promised to Abraham; and not Hagar, who was in the bloom of youth. So Mary espoused to a carpenter, and none of the ladies of Judea, was pitched upon to be the mother of our Lord. He chose his apostles from among fishermen generally, not from among the learned men of the age, Paul only excepted.

4. Things brought about by means in their own nature, and in

the eyes of men, quite contrary to the design. Neither is this the manner of men, but it is his. The blind man is cured with clay laid on his eyes. Joseph is advanced by means of his being sold as a slave, and put into the dungeon. The wheel of providence that seems to drive away from the design, doth often but take an unknown road to it.

Use I. Let us judge nothing before the time, nor be hasty in our conclusions on the conduct of providence. It will but proclaim our rashness and folly, and we will be forced at length to retract our censures; Psalm cxvi. 11, 12, "I said in my haste, All men are liars." His method of management is often what we cannot rightly judge of till we see the end; Jam. v. 11, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

2. Let us beware of penning up the great counsellor to our known roads. Hence God's people often torment themselves in vain, thinking that, because they cannot see him in all the roads within their view, he is not coming to them at all. In the meantime, he may be making speed towards them, though in a darkened road, where they look not for him, as in the conduct of Jesus towards the disciples; Matth. xiv. 25—27, "And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." There are many methods of deliverance known to the counsellor, that fall not within the compass of our narrow view; and when we are set on them, we know not whither they do lead; Isa. xlii. 16, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

3. See here the necessity of acquaintance with the Scriptures, and of faith; 2 Pet. i. 19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." There the mysteries of the kingdom are unfolded, and by faith the beauty of them is perceived. Those who are strangers to the book of the word, cannot miss to blunder in the book of providence to their own soul's hurt; and unbelief of the word makes beautiful pieces of providence look very odd; for it fixes men's eyes, as if one should stare on the wrong side of arras

hangings, having no power to turn up the right side of them; Psalm lxxiii. 16, 17, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end."

*Fifthly.* He does nothing without a becoming reason. There is not one random stroke in the whole of the conduct of providence; Eph. i. 11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The red and black horses came out between the mountains of brass, as well as the rest, Zech. vi. 1, 2, and every event is written in the sealed book, Rev. v. There is a reason for every dispensation, and it is a reason that is good and valid. This appears, if ye consider that,

1. His infinite wisdom sees all things at once perfectly; Psalm cxlvii. 5. "His understanding is infinite." The fitness of a means for compassing an end, cannot be hid to him, as it is often unto men; and he cannot be liable to mistake in that matter, though men, through their weaknes, as often pitch on means unfit as fit, Ezek. i. 18, and x. 12. Therefore he does all fitly and reasonably, since he is withal infinitely good.

2. Even those things which sometimes cannot be discerned to have a fitness in them for any good purpose, do in end appear beautiful; those that appear confused at first, when done out appear orderly, so that in end his people are made to say, He has done all things well. So was the dispensation anent Joseph; Gen. l. 20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." All of them, whatever compasses they make, do by virtue of the promise concenter in God's glory and his people's good, Rom. viii. 28, and ix. 22, 23.

Thus are the mysterious steps of providence before named all managed, and may be accounted for.

1. Things are let go on to the utmost point of hopelessness, that the power of God may appear the more in bringing about the delivery, and that it may be the more signal mercy to his people, and fill them the more with joy and wonder, John xi. 14, 15. The Lord left his people in Babylon, till they were like dry bones lying about the graves; why? see Ezek. xxxvii. 13, "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves." Psalm cxxvi. 1. 4, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south." Deliverance is sweet at any time; but the more hopeless, the more sweet and surprising is it when it comes.

2. By treating his friends with afflictions and trials, he pours contempt on the world, and all its honour, wealth, and ease; shewing to all thereby, that those things which carnal men set their hearts on, are such things as he hath no value for, else he would never dispose of them at the rate he does. Thereby he invites his enemies to repentance, and renders them inexcusable if they be not gained thereby, Rom. ii. 4. And he tries the faith, love, and patience of his own, and thereby lays up for their greater weight of glory, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

3. He chooseth the most unlikely instruments and means to accomplish his purposes, that he may stain the pride of all glory, Is. xxiii. 9, that all may be referred to himself as the first cause and last end of all things, which is the reasonable order, 1 Cor. i. 31. Therefore he "put the treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. iv. 7, and for the same reason not in the finest, but the coarsest of the sort.

4. He works by contrary means, that he may shew himself to be above means, and to have them at his beck, and to surprise his people more sweetly with the unlooked-for effect of them. The character of divine power is the more deeply engraven on the effect, that the means of themselves are not of that tendency.

Use 1. Then all that the Lord does is well done. There is nothing amiss in it, Deut. xxxii. 4; in the blackest dispensation there is a line of purity. The smoking oven is joined with a burning lamp, Gen. xv. 17. Compare Isa. lxii. 1. In the whole fabric of providence towards the children of men, there is not one wrong pin, there is nothing awry, but everything lies straight to its end.

2. When ye cannot find out the reason, a becoming reason of some dispensation towards the church or yourselves, yet believe that it is not without a becoming reason, and be satisfied in your minds that it is well done, because the counsellor has done it. When you put a straight stick in the water, it appears to your eyes to be crooked; yet you do not think or believe in your judgment that it is really crooked. That appearance is owing to your eyesight, not to the stick itself, which remains straight. So is it with us oft-times in respect of the dispensations of providence. But let faith correct the errors of sense in this matter, Jer. xii. 1.

3. Wait ye, and the reason of the most mysterious dispensation will appear in a clear light at length. There is a promise for it; John xiii. 7, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Since the counsellor does nothing without a reason, he will for his own honour satisfy all his friends with it,

and silence his enemies for ever; and thereby he will bountifully reward believing waiters, and confound unbelieving quarrellers of his conduct.

*Sixthly*, He manageth all with a depth of wisdom. Counsel speaks not only a reasonable management, but a depth of wisdom; for it is to things of the greatest weight and difficulty that counsellors are required; Prov. xx. 5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out." Hereof take the following evidences.

Evidence 1. His compassing a great variety of ends by one and the same means, and all these designed. What a vast variety of ends did he compass by Joseph's being sold into Egypt? Hereby Jacob was tried, the naughtiness of his sons discovered, Joseph himself proved, Jacob's posterity provided for, Christ was typified, way was made for the greatest events under the Old Testament, &c. So some suffer, and the Counsellor designs the good of many thereby; 2 Cor. i. 6, "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings, which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." In men's management there may be happy undesigned hits; but all these are designed by the infinite mind of the Counsellor.

Evid. 2. That no man can fully reach what is in the womb of providence, in the most open and obvious steps of it. He may see this and the other design in it, but still there is something beyond what he sees; Psalm. xcii. 5, "O Lord, how great are thy works; and thy thoughts are very deep." Sober-minded men of learning will own, that they cannot have a full and comprehensive notion of the least insect; they know not but the Creator may have put in it some quality which they cannot discern. And sober-minded Christians will own the same in the most obvious steps of providence; Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Evid. 3. The greatest variety of designs in a dispensation is guarded on every side by the wisdom of the Counsellor, that one shall not overthrow, nor interfere with another. Man's wisdom cannot prevent, that where they have many irons in the fire together, some of them must cool, while others of them are working; but every the least design of the counsellor must take, by his wise management; Isa. xlvi. 10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." See Joel ii. 7, 8, "They shall run like mighty men, they shall climb the wall like men of war, and they shall march

every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path : and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded." For the wheels are full of eyes round about.

Evid. 4. His bringing the greatest of things out of the smallest beginnings. O how often does the Counsellor, in the depth of his wisdom, rear up golden pillars on leaden bases, and make the cloud like a man's hand at first, cover the whole face of the heavens ? Thus he manages in the kingdom of nature; for an instance of which, man needs not go without himself; but consider what a minute thing it is from which this body of his, growing to such a bulk, in such comely proportion, with such a variety of organs doth take its rise; Psalm cxxxix. 14, " I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." In the kingdom of grace; in its beginning in a soul, and in the world, it is as a grain of mustard seed, Matth. xiii. 31. So Psalm lxxii. 16, " There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." How low were the beginnings of that kingdom which has now filled the earth ? The stone is become a great mountain, filling the earth, Dan. ii. 35.

Evid. 5. His making the most weighty and surprising turns in matters, upon the smallest of events. If we trace the turn the affairs of the church took in Mordecai's days, to the overthrowing of Haman's desperate plot, to the first spring of it; we will find it was a vapour that had got up into Ahasuerus's head that he could not sleep, Esther vi. 1. In the smallest of things God is very great. He that hangs the earth upon nothing, often makes a very minute circumstance to be the hinge on which great things turn; 2 Kings iii. 23.

Evid. 6. His counteracting successfully the united force of devils and men, in all ages, set for the overthrow of his kingdom; Prov. xxi. 30, " There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord." The subjects of Christ's kingdom are weak, and easily beguiled; Satan is most subtle, watchful, and incessant in his acting against them; the war has been carried on by hell against them through all ages; the generality of the world is on Satan's side; often the feet of the saints are almost slipt; yet the church is preserved, not one of Christ's kindly subjects lost. This proclaims aloud the depth of wisdom in her King, Micah iv. 9. See Gen. iii. 15.

Evid. 7. *Lastly*, His outshooting the devil in his own bow, and

bringing good out of evil, Phil. i. 12. The malice of hell never appeared more, than in the sufferings Christ himself was put to: yet out of these was the salvation of an elect world brought; and these were they that shook the kingdom of Satan to the foundations. The very temptations and falls of the saints are overruled to some advantage, Rom. viii. 28.

Use I. Then whatsoever he doth, is not only well done, but best done, Eccl. iii. 14. If thou art out of Christ, whatever thou meetest with in the providence of God, it is that which for the time is best for the glory of God. If thou art in Christ, whatsoever thou meeetest with, is for the time best for God's honour, and best for thee too. For all is the product of the depth of wisdom. The reason of the difference is, that the believer being in God's covenant, God's honour and his good are joint interests secured by the covenant; unbelievers are not so.

2. The believer may securely trust him to whom he has committed his soul, with the management of all that concerns him; Psalm xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Our anxiety should be confined to our duty; to be otherwise anxious, as for provision, protection, and the like, is but the fruit of unbelief; Luke xii. 29, "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." Since God stands in the relation of a Father, and is infinitely wise, there is complete ground for the security of faith; Matth. vi. 8, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

3. In the case of doubtful events, believe that the Counsellor will do what is best. This is what ye are to believe in such a case; Psalm lxxxv. 12, "The Lord will give that which is good." Here is the rest of faith in cases of a doubtful issue: and here one may securely rest waiting the issue, which the depth of wisdom shall in due time bring forth. *Dominus meus omnia, &c.*—Luther.

*Seventhly*, and *Lastly*, He is the best Counsellor; there is none like him. There are many counsellors, nobody wants some; but his name is Counsellor, as if there were not another; for he is the Counsellor by way of eminency.

Here we shall,

1*st*, Confirm the truth of this assertion, That Christ is the best Counsellor.

2*dly*, Shew wherein he counsels sinners.

3*dly*, How he gives his counsel.

*First*, To confirm the truth of this assertion, That Christ is the best Counsellor, consider,

1. He is of the Father's choice and nomination for a Counsellor to us; 1 Cor. i. 30, "He is made of God unto us wisdom." When the Father from eternity, pitying fallen man in his ruined state, was thinking on a Counsellor, that might by his wisdom retrieve their sinking affairs, he pitched on Jesus Christ; Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." The highest angel was too weak for such a burden; but the Son, who was of the cabinet-council of heaven, was the choice; and sinners are referred to him, Matth. xvii. 5.

2. He is the saint's choice in all ages for a Counsellor; who all with one voice say; Psalm lxxiii. 24, 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Men are by nature out of themselves, and so will keep the guiding of themselves in their own hands; but as soon as they come to themselves, they renounce their own wisdom, will no more believe their own eyes, but by faith choose him for their Counsellor.

3. He never misseth the point in his counselling, Prov. xxx. 5. "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." The best of counsellors among men will miss at a time; but infinite wisdom is not liable to mistake. He sees, and sees through all that is past and present, and thoroughly foresees all that is to come. How can he err in his counsel?

*Secondly*, Wherein doth Christ counsel sinners? He counsels them,

1. In their greatest concerns, their concerns for eternity. In these they have least skill; in these a mistaking of their measures is most fatal; so his counsel respects these chiefly. And he counsels them,

(1.) To the way of peace, which they know not, Rev. iii. 18. The gospel is Christ's counsel to sinners; thereby he points them the way to the favour of God, the pardon of their sin, the securing to themselves a right to heaven, and freedom from the wrath and curse of God. He presseth and plies them to take that counsel, with the strongest arguments.

(2.) In the way to peace and happiness, how they being set on it, may keep it till they arrive at perfect happiness, Psalm lxxiii. 24. His clients are in a wilderness while in this world; and he is to be instead of eyes to them there. In every new emergent difficulty, they have access to his counsel, what course to take in such a temptation, dark step, or case.

2. In their lesser concerns, viz. the things of time. He refuses

not to be their Counsellor in the matters of this present life. And,

(1.) In their matters of greater weight, he allows sinners to seek his counsel; and it is their sin that they neglect it, Josh. ix. 14. There is an oracle to be consulted in our temporal, as well as in our spiritual affairs; for the promise reacheth the one as well as the other; Psalm cxii. 5, "A good man—will guide his affairs with discretion."

(2.) In their smallest matters; Prov. iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." There is nothing so small but the providence of God reaches it, even to the very hairs of the head, Matth. x. 30; and on very small things great matters may depend. Things small in themselves may be very great in their consequences; therefore we have need of a Counsellor in the least.

So Christ is a Counsellor for sinners in all their matters, of whatsoever kind. And this is a peculiar excellency of this Counsellor, that he can give counsel in every thing. Men consult divines in their soul's case, physicians in the case of their body, lawyers in the case of their estate, men experienced in their occupation; but Christ is a Counsellor in them all.

*Thirdly*, How doth Christ give his counsel.

1. He proposeth his counsel in and by his word; Psalm cxix. 24, "Thy testimonies are my counsellors." If ye would have his counsel, ye must go believingly to his word. That is it by which the answer is given to those that consult the holy oracle. And there is no case can happen to one, but in the word there is proper counsel for it. This is a mystery to the formal and profane; but the exercised Christian knows it by experience to be true.

2. He clears it, and opens it, and confirms it by his providence; Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." Providence taken by itself, without respect to the word, is a very uncertain light to walk by, as in Jonah's finding the ship going to Tarshish; but when providence is considered in subordination to the word, it is of eminent use for discovering the Lord's mind in particular cases; as in the case of Peter; Acts x. 17, "Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius, had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate." And therefore all tender Christians will be serious observers of providence; Psalm cvii. 43, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

3. He makes it effectual by his Holy Spirit; John xvi. 13, "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all

truth." He shines on the word, and on the work of providence, sets both in a clear light, and enables, as well as determines the believer to follow it. So the counsel of the great counsellor is the light of life, John viii. 12; promised to all Christ's followers. Men following their own wisdom and delusive counsels, cannot expect the Spirit's efficacy; and the word and providence cannot be effectual without the Spirit; but the Spirit makes both effectual to those that wait for Christ's counsel.

Use 1. Then take him for your Counsellor, renouncing all other. And,

1. Renounce your own wisdom, do not lean to your own abilities for the management of yourself; but know your own wisdom to be but weakness and folly; Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Fallen man lost his spiritual eye-sight, and he can see nothing aright in spirituals till he go to the Counsellor, Rev. iii. 18; and he is apt to go wrong even in other things.

2. Renounce the counsel of the world, and shut your ears to it; Prov. xix. 27, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Mind it is the character of a happy man, that he "walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners," Psalm i. 1; and the character of one in a natural state; Eph. ii. 2, "to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air." They who make the way of the world their rule, must perish with the world.

3. Take Christ for your Counsellor instead of all other; Prov. xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart; and let thine eyes observe my ways." Give up yourselves wholly to his management; let him be your sole Counsellor, and that for all things; you need a guide, the Father has given him to you for that end; Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him for a leader unto the people." Close with him as your guide and counsellor.

Use 2. Follow the counsel that he is giving you. Christ is counselling you all in the gospel; even those that will not consult him, and have refused his counsel, he is counselling still. His counsels are two.

1. He is counselling you to believe in himself, John vi. 29; to come to him, to come to his market of free grace, and buy there, without money or price, Rev. iii. 18; Isa. lv. 1; to take him for a Head, and husband, for all.

2. To be holy; to give up with your sinful courses, that will ruin

you; and to betake yourselves to the way of holiness, without which there is no seeing the Lord; Ezek. xviii. 31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" See both together; Prov. ix. 5, 6, "Come, eat of my bread" saith Wisdom, "and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

Use 3. *Lastly*, Then make use of Christ as a counsellor, by your consulting him daily, that ye may not walk but by his direction. And,

1. Be habitually tender in labouring to know the mind of God, as to sin and duty, in particular cases; and in your common, as well as in your religious affairs, Isa. xxviii. 26.

2. Be upright and sincere in your consulting him, lying open to the divine determination, Jer. xlii. 20; compare chap. xli. 17.

3. Humbly entertain the divine determination, though it fall to be cross to your inclination. Do not, like Baalam, tempt God, till ye get an answer to your own mind, Numb. xxii.

4. Beware of going cross to duty cleared, and rejecting God's counsel given, 1 Kings xiii.

5. *Lastly*, Pray much; ejaculatory, and secret; and carefully observe providences, while ye are waiting for the Lord's counsel. The light is from the Lord, if it is strengthening to duty, and overpower corruptions against it.

## CHRIST THE MIGHTY GOD.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*His Name shall be called—The Mighty God.*

These words in the Hebrew are, God Mighty One. This is the third syllable of the name of our Lord Redeemer; and as this name is given to him as God-man, so this syllable of it natively respects both, as he is God, he is the true God; as he is man, he is the mighty one; the greatest heroes are but weaklings to him.

Doctrine. Jesus Christ, the prince presented and given to us of the Father, is and shews himself to be true God, the Mighty One.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. That Christ is the true God.

II. That the man Christ is the Mighty One.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall shew, that Christ is the true God. This appears from these following things.

1. That he is the true God, the scripture expressly calls him, and asserts him to be so; John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." Acts xx. 28, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Rom. ix. 5, "Of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever;" the true God; 1 John v. 20, "This is the true God, and eternal life;" Jehovah or Lord; Mal. iii. 1, "The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant." This name is peculiar to God only; Psalm lxxxiii. 18, "That men may know, that thou whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth."

2. The attributes or perfections of God, distinguishing God from all created beings, are in him, and ascribed to him, He is eternal, or from everlasting, Micah v. 2; independent and almighty, Rev. i. 8; everywhere present, John iii. 13; omniscient, John xxi. 17; and unchangeable, Heb. i. 11, 12.

3. The works peculiar to God alone, are done by him, and ascribed to him. He is the creator of all things, John i. 3; and preserver of them in their being, Heb. i. 2, 3. He raiseth the dead by his own power, and at his own pleasure, John v. 21, 26. He is the Saviour of sinners, Hos. i. 7; and there is no Saviour besides God, chap. xiii. 4; yea, whatsoever the Father doth, he doth, John v. 19.

4. Divine worship, which must be given to God only, Matth. iv. 10, is due to him; for the angels are commanded to worship him, Heb. i. 6. Every one is to give the same honour to him, as to the Father, John v. 23. They are blessed that trust in him, by faith resting on him, Psalm ii. 12; while they are cursed that put their trust in man, Jer. xvii. 5. He is the object of prayer, Acts vii. 59; and we are baptised in his name, Matth. xxviii. 19.

5. *Lastly*, He is equal with the Father, Phil. ii. 6; and one with him, John x. 30. Now, seeing God will not give his glory to another, Isa. xlviii. 11; it follows, that though Christ is a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from the Father. And therefore he is, with the Father and Holy Ghost, the one supreme Most High God.

II. I shall shew, that the man Christ is the mighty one.

1*st*, He doth and has done works that no other could do, John xv. 24. His works proclaim him the mighty one in all respects; mighty in the reach of his wisdom, mighty in treasures, mighty in moyen

and interest, and mighty in battle. And there are four mighty works of Christ to which there is an eye in this his name.

1. His fully answering all the demands of the broken law in the room of the elect, Psalm lxxxix. 19. A work none else could have done; a weight none else could have borne; a vast debt none else could have paid, and cleared. But he did it by his birth, life, and death; and completely, so that he got up the discharge, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

2. His destroying of sin, Gen. iii. 15. The whole sin of the whole elect, he gave a death blow to, at once upon the cross; to the guilt and power of it; so that its utter destruction in them all was as much secured thereby, as Christ's death by his being nailed to the cross; Rom. vi. 6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." He is now pursuing that blow, in the conversion and sanctification of the elect; driving out sin by degrees from among them; he will give the last stroke at the last day, and then that hellish flood shall be as much dried up as it had never been.

3. His victory over death and the grave; Hos. xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Sin entering, death went out over the world a conqueror, armed with a sting that none could pluck out. But Christ encountered death, and dying was the destruction of it, and of the grave its fellow, viz. in respect of all his. The victory will be complete at the last day; 1 Cor. xv. 26, "Then the last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death." Isa. xxv. 8, "Then God will swallow up death in victory.

4. *Lastly*, His victory over the devil, Gen. iii. 15. Satan conquered all mankind in Adam; but here was a man match and more for him. He engaged with the enemy as a tempter, in the wilderness, and he foiled him; as a roaring lion, on the cross, and overcame him, Col. ii. 15; as a violent possessor, in the hearts of the elect, from time to time, and he turns him out, out of one after another, till he shall not have a foot of ground in the elect world. And then he will attack him in his proper possession, viz. the reprobate, standing on the left hand of the Judge, and drive him and them away off the earth into the pit. So may we say; Psalm xcviii. 1, "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory."

2*dly*, He hath all at his command in heaven and earth, whether

created persons or things, Matth. xxviii. 18. The man Christ is heir of all things, Heb. i. 2; Lord of all the works of God's hands, Psalm viii. What a mighty one must he then be?

3*dly*, *Lastly*, Being God as well as man, his power is infinite. Not that infinite power is subjected in the human nature of Christ, a created thing, and such is his human nature, is not capable of infinite perfections. But the human nature and divine nature make but one person in him; and so he who is the man, is of infinite power.

Use 1. This serves to refute the damnable heresy of those who impugn the supreme Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. This age of apostacy, having been unfruitful under the gospel, comes naturally to question the foundation-points of Christianity, And such is this, that overthrows all our salvation at once. When the Father provided a prince for lost sinners to save them, he gave them one who was God mighty one. None of inferior dignity could serve the purpose.

2. It speaks terror to all the enemies of Christ, in principles or practice. Ah! sinners, why do ye reject him for a prince, trample on his laws? &c. Ye cannot make head against him, who is God mighty one, who can crush you in pieces as a moth. True, he does not at every occasion exert his power against the rebellious sons of men; but pray, consider this is the time of his grace, wherein he is waiting for your repentance; if that were over, then follows that; Luke xix. 27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

3. It speaks comfort to the church and every believer in their low estate. Whatever be your wants, he is able to supply them; your weakness, there is might enough in him; be your case never so hopeless, it is never without the reach of his help. Let believers learn to rejoice in their prince, their head in whom they are complete.

4. *Lastly*, It serves to exhort all to take him for their prince. O kiss ye the Son presented to you in the gospel-offer! renounce other lords, and by faith embrace him. And therefore consider,

(1.) His might will be for you, for your provision, protection, and happiness, if ye be his.

(2.) It will be against you for time and eternity, if ye refuse him.

## CHRIST THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*His name shall be called the Everlasting Father.*

This is the fourth syllable of Christ's name. Having called him a child, a son, a child born, a son given; it is shown here, that though he is a son, he is a Father too; yea, though he is a child born, he is the Father of eternity, *i.e.* The Everlasting Father, which plainly leads us to his divine nature.

Doctrine. Jesus Christ, the prince presented and given to us of the Father, is himself the Everlasting Father.

In handling this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. In what respects Christ is the Everlasting Father.

II. What a Father he is.

III. *Lastly*, Improve the subject.

I. In what respects is Christ the Everlasting Father?

1*st*, He is the Father of all things, who was from everlasting, before all. He is, with his Father and Spirit, one God, the common Father of all by creation; 1 Cor. viii. 6, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." Hence he is called the beginning of the creation of God, Rev. iii. 14; from whom all had their beginning. So he is the Father of all men, more particularly, Mal. ii. 10; of their souls and bodies, but especially of their souls, Heb. xii. 9; all men, yea, all creatures whatsoever, owing their being to him, as a son to the father. And so being before all creatures, himself is uncreated and eternal, Prov. viii. 23.

2*dly*, He is the Father of all believers, in a peculiar manner, who will be to everlasting; and that in two respects.

1. As he is, with his Father and Spirit, one God, Eph. iv. 6; the one God and Father of the family of heaven, who has adopted believers for his sons and daughters, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. And thus we call him, with the Father and Spirit, our Father, Matth. vi. 9.

2. As he is Mediator, God man; Heb. ii. 13, "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me." So believers are his children, his seed, Isa. liii. 10; standing in a peculiar relation to him as such. And of this relation there is a threefold ground.

(1.) Believers are of his flesh and of his bones, Eph. v. 30. A plain allusion to the woman's being formed of Adam's body; whereby it comes to pass, that all mankind do entirely owe their original

to Adam; all his posterity being born of the woman who was made of him. So all believers owe their original entirely to the body of Christ, cast into the sleep of death on the cross; Rom. vii. 4, "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." Isa. liii. 10, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." And herein Abraham was a type of him; of whose body, when in a sort dead, a seed innumerable as the stars did spring, Rom. iv. 18, 19; Heb. xi. 12. So from the body of Christ dead on the cross and grave, spring the innumerable company of believers that ever were, are, or shall be; John xii. 24, 32, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

(2.) They are begotten of him into their new life and nature, which they have as believers, Deut. xxxii. 6, 18. The seed is the word of the gospel, James i. 18; that incorruptible seed, 1 Pet. i. 23; quickened by his Spirit, John vi. 63; whereby being made to believe, and so united to Christ, they are made new creatures, Eph. i. 13; 2. Cor. v. 17. So that as they owe the purchase of their gracious being to his merit, they owe their actual gracious being to his Spirit, both wholly.

(3.) They do in a peculiar manner bear, and were appointed to bear Christ's image, as children of that Father, Rom. viii. 29. Believers bear not only the image of God, but the image of Christ. There is a difference betwixt these two. The latter implies all that the former does; but it takes in more also. There are two parts of it.

1. Conformity to Christ in his holiness. And in this respect believers are like him, as the wax impressed with the seal bears the like figure, Eph. i. 13. John i. 16. And here is the image of God, which all believers do bear, and which is a part of the image of Christ. This image of God believers have not at the first hand, as Adam had it; but at the second hand, *viz.* from Christ; as Adam's children would have had it from him, if he had stood, and as we now actually have Satan's image, impressed by Satan at the fall on Adam, and by Adam communicated to us. So God being to restore his image to fallen man, first impressed it on the man Christ, that from him it might be communicated to believers in him. The man Christ was made like God, as a son is like a father; and believers are made like the man Christ. On the man Christ that image was impressed, and from him it is expressed on us, and thence called *Christ's image*.

That is, God making the man Christ the second Adam, made him

after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. So believers being created again in Christ, he communicates to them of that knowledge, righteousness, &c. which image of Christ, begun now, will be perfected after in all believers. All this is clear from 1 Cor. xv. 49, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly;" Rom. viii. 29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Hence believers are said to be "created in Christ," Eph. ii. 10. As Eve was made in the image of God, being made in the image of Adam, Gen. ii. 18, so the church is made in the image of Christ.

2. Conformity to Christ and his sufferings. This is it that is particularly aimed at, Rom. viii. 29, compared with verse 28. Hence believers are said to be "partakers of the sufferings of Christ," 1 Pet. iv. 13. And their sufferings are called his, 2 Cor. i. 5. In his sufferings he gave us an example to follow, 1 Peter ii. 21. What can be more natural than that the members of a suffering head be suffering members? that the followers of a crucified Christ bear the cross after him?

This conformity lies in three things; for the wicked suffer too.

(1) Believers' sufferings are destructive of sin; Isa. xxvii. 9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." The more Christ suffered, the more the works of the devil were brought near to ruin. The man who by his sufferings is made more holy, more loosed from the world, more pressing after God in Christ, is conformed to Christ in his sufferings. Though indeed the progress may not be sensible sometimes, more than that of the sun in the firmament, or a tree in the earth.

(2) Believers welcome their sufferings on that account, as they tend to the ruin of sin; as the sick man does a bitter drug for the sake of health, Matth. xvi. 24, 25. It is true, they may have their fits of impatience under the rod, and may be desirous to be free; but they will turn towards a resignation. Our Lord Jesus, who never in the least murmured, said, Matth. xxvi. 39, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

(3) Believers' sufferings will have a happy and glorious issue. As Christ went to the crown by the cross, so will they, 1 Tim. ii. 12. While the sufferings of others will end in eternal suffering, their present sufferings will end in glory: their longest and blackest night will have a blessed morning, an eternal day; with which their worst nights of trouble are not to be compared, Rom. viii. 17.

Thus he is the believer's Father, and he is their everlasting Father.

1. The relation is never interrupted from the first moment it is made. Once in God's family, never out of it again, for shorter or longer time. Their Father may frown on them, and chastise them, and hide his love from them; but he is their Father still, Psal. lxxxix. 30.—33. The adoption lasts, they are still of Christ's body, their new nature is never lost, and his image is never quite defaced in them.

2. The relation is never ended. He will be their Father through all eternity. Among men there is no interruption of the fatherly relation, while the father and the son live; but death dissolves it. But here death cannot dissolve the relation, Rom. viii. 38, 39. He will be, and they will be for ever; and he will be their Father for ever, and they his children, Rev. xxi. 7.

II. What a Father is Christ? He is a non-such Father.

1. He is the most honourable Father; the King of kings, and Lord of lords. None whose eyes are opened, but they value this relation to Christ more than all the fading honours of a world, 1 John iii. 1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Moses preferred it to the being called the son of the daughter of a king, Heb. xi. 24, 25.

2. The most loving and compassionate Father. His love has gone beyond that of fathers, and mothers too, even to their sucking children, Isa. xlix. 15, 16. David wished he had died for his rebellious son, but Christ really died for his.

3. The most helpful Father. Many times fathers, though they fain would, cannot help their children: but he can help his in all cases. In the greatest danger he is a refuge; in all wants, he has store for their supply; if they be held at short commons at any time, it is because he sees it best for them. In death, when neither father nor mother can help, he will, Psal. xlviii. 14, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." He is ever a present help.

4. The richest Father, that has the best inheritance to give his children; 1 Pet. i. 4, "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." He has prepared for them a better country, a glorious city, a palace for their mansion-house; and the richest treasures; and these such as shall never go from them, nor they from them.

5. The wisest Father, "God only wise." To his disposal one may securely resign himself absolutely. He ever seeks his childrens' welfare: and he cannot be mistaken in his measures.

6. *Lastly*, He has provided the best attendants for his children in

their life. Angels are ministering spirits to them during their life, Heb. i. 14.; and at their death they carry their souls into heaven, Luke xvi. 22. Yea himself is ever with them, in life and in death.

Use. Then, sinners, take him for your everlasting Father. Come out of Satan's family: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate. Forget your father's house, and your own people." He is presented and given to you the Everlasting Father; receive him. And,

1. Ye that are fatherless. The father of your flesh is dead and gone; ye have the fewer to care for you, and see to your welfare. Here is an everlasting Father for you.

2. Ye that see yourselves in a helpless case, like orphans in the world. Created props and pillars have been taken from you, one after another; and ye see yourselves fram'd sted*. Here is a Father for you, Hos. xiv. 3, "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

3 All of you will find yourselves in such a case as none in the world will be able to relieve. Choose him now for your Father, who will be everlasting.

Motive 1. He is your Father by creation, let him be your Father by choice. He has the first and best right to you; if one is to serve, will he not rather choose to serve his father than another?

Motive 2. There are blessed privileges of this state. As,

(1.) You will have access to him with holy boldness, Eph iii. 12. He will be well pleased with your voice, Cant. ii. 14.

(2.) Special immunities and freedoms, as king's children; freedom from the law as a covenant of works; free from the curse; free from the hurt of everything.

(3.) Fatherly love and pity, Psalm ciii. 13. He will distinguish between weakness and wickedness. He corrects with a fatherly reluctancy; Lam. iii. 33, "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

(4.) Protection; Prov. xiv. 26, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge." Provision both for soul and body, and seasonable correction.

(5.) An inheritance and portion, according to the Father's quality. Rom. viii. 17, "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

Motive 3. *Lastly*, If ye take him not for your Father, ye cannot escape him as your wrathful judge.

* *i. e.* In the situation of strangers.

## CHRIST THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

Isaiah ix. 6,

*His name shall be called the Prince of Peace.*

This is the last syllable of the name of our glorious Redeemer. It consists of two letters. (1.) He is a Prince, an eminent one. (2.) Peace. He is the Prince of Peace. As the Father of eternity is the everlasting Father; so the Prince of Peace is the peaceful Prince.

Doct. Jesus Christ presented and given to us of the Father, is the peaceful Prince.

Of Christ's principality we have already spoken; we are now to consider him as the peaceful Prince. And in prosecuting this doctrine, I shall only show in what respects Christ is the peaceful Prince; and then make some practical improvement.

In what respects is Christ the peaceful Prince? And,

*First*, More generally, we take it up in these three particulars. He is the peaceful Prince,

1. In respect of disposition. He is a prince of the most peaceful disposition; Matth. xi. 29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Peace is woven into his nature. Though he is the mighty One, who is of such power as to frown a sinner to destruction; yet his great power is tempered with the greatest meekness and peacefulness. The prince of this world is the roaring lion; the Prince of heaven, the Lamb, John i. 29, even on his throne, Rev. v. 6.

2. In respect of action and operation. Peace is his work he pursued all along, and doth still pursue; Eph. ii. 14, "For he is our peace." He is the great peace-maker. Adam's sin and the sin of his posterity set all at red war, and kept them so: but Christ the second Adam travels for peace. "Blessed are the peace-makers," and he is blessed for ever on his peace-making, Phil. ii. 8, 9.

3. In respect of the state of his kingdom; Rom. xiv. 17, "The kingdom of God is peace." Peace in the language of the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament is prosperity; so a peaceful prince is a prosperous one. Thus Solomon was a type of him, who had a reign of the greatest peace and prosperity, Psalm lxxii. 7. His subjects may enjoy peace whoever want it.

*Secondly*, More particularly. And,

1*st*, He is the peaceful Prince, peaceful of disposition, in the following respects.

1. He bears long with his enemies, he is long-suffering, 2 Pet. iii. 9. Many calls he gives them which they neglect; but he calls them still; many affronts they do to him, yet his deserved wrath is held in; and still he waits, if so be they may be brought to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. There must be a mighty inclination to peace where it is so.

2. He bears much at the hands of his friends, but never casts them off, John xiii. 2. O the weakness, witlessness, and folly that hangs about them! O the ingratitude, untenderness, and backslidings they fall into! They reflect dishonour many times on him by their way; but they experience him to be the Prince of peace, Psalm lxxviii. 38.

3. He is easy of access, for poor sinners. The worst of sinners may have access to him if they will; John vi. 37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Papists make mediators to him; but there needs none to him; whoever comes to him is welcome. And there needs none to God but him. Whatever is their business in the court of heaven, he will readily do it for them.

4. He is ready to forgive, Psalm lxxxvi. 5. His offending friends are readily pardoned, and restored to wonted favour; his rebellious enemies are readily pardoned on their submission, and received into the number of his friends. His peacefulness is such, that peace is his delight.

5. He is very familiar with his true subjects. He treats all his servants, not as servants, but as friends; and communicates to them his secrets; John xv. 15, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Love and good-will shines forth in his countenance.

6. The afflicting of his people, is as it were against the grain with him; Lam. iii. 33, "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." There is a necessity for it, for which he is obliged to do it; 1 Pet. i. 6, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." The apostle distinguisheth between men's correcting and his in Heb. xii. 10, "They verily for a few days chastened us, after their own pleasure: but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." And in it he carries along the pity of a father, Psalm ciii. 13, 14, and so is afflicted in their affliction, Isa. lxiii. 9.

7. *Lastly*, He bore his own sufferings with the utmost peaceableness, meekness and patience. The angels sang at his birth, Peace on earth; and the earth never saw such a pattern of peace. In his

life, which was a continued suffering, he never shewed the least discomposure. In his death, he prayed for his enemies.

2*dly*, He is the peaceful Prince, peaceful in action and operation. He acted for peace, as never another did. He brought about such peace as had never been known, if he had not taken it in hand. And here we may consider,

1. What peace is effected by this Prince of peace.

(1.) Peace with God; Isa. liii. 5, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." Sinners were at war with God, and God with them; and there could be no peace betwixt the parties, till the Prince of peace turned to be Mediator of the peace. The war went on, sinners doing as they could against God, and God in a state of war with the sinner, blocking up all commerce with heaven of a saving sort, &c. But he steps in, lays hands on both, and makes up the peace.

(2.) Peace among men. Men's peace with God being lost, the peace among themselves was broken too. See the case of mankind by nature in this point; Tit. iii. 3, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But Christ brings them together in him again, to love and charity one to another, Isa. xi. 6. And wherever he makes peace with God for a man, he implants love to men in that man's heart. Particularly, he made peace between Jews and Gentiles, Eph. ii. 14.

(3.) Peace within men, peace of conscience; Rom. xiv. 17, "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Sin by itself breaks the peace within one's own breast. The guilt of it is like a thorn in the flesh, that till it be plucked out ceases not to gall; the reign of it is like a tyrant in the house, that enslaves, and keeps in disturbance all therein. Christ the Prince of peace, by his blood and Spirit, only can restore the true peace within.

2. What is his work about the peace, that threefold peace?

(1.) He purchased it by his precious blood, Eph. ii. 14, 15. There is a peace the wicked have, that is a stolen and usurped peace, known by this mark that it is a peace in sin, James iii. 17. But the peace of the Prince of peace is a dear-bought peace. It cost him to be denied to his own peace, and swim through a red sea of suffering for it; Isa. liii. 5, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him."

(2.) He makes the peace by his own efficacy. The covenant of grace is the covenant of peace, and he is the Mediator of it. He travels betwixt God and the rebel sinner, till the reconciliation is made. He does by his Spirit bring the sinner into the covenant of

peace, and by his intercession obtains peace with God for him. He by the same Spirit unites men to himself by faith, and to one another in love. And by his blood sprinkled on the soul, he removes the guilt of sin, and plucks out the thorn; and by his sanctifying Spirit breaks the power of turbulent lusts, and so creates peace, Isa. lvii. 19.

(3.) He maintains the peace made; Isa. xxvi. 3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." He is the believer's resident at the court of Heaven, that takes up emergent differences, and hinders matters to come to a total rupture betwixt God and them any more. And it is by the efficacy of his blood and Spirit that peace within men, and love among men who are his, are continued.

(4.) He restores the peace, when at any time it is brangled; Isa. lvii. 18, "I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners." While believers are in this world, they are upon a sea; and in that sea they often meet with storms. Sometimes the storm blows from above, sometimes from without, sometimes from within; sometimes fightings without, and fears within; yea sometimes all three blow together. But the Prince of peace again clears the sky above, Job xxxiii. 23, 24. He "stills the tumult of the people," Psalm lxv. 7, and quells all disturbance within, Isa. lvii. 19.

(5.) *Lastly*, He perfects the peace. It is begun now, but he will not leave it imperfect; Psalm cxxxviii. 8, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." He began Israel's peace in bringing them out of Egypt, and perfected it in bringing them to Canaan; so he begins his people's peace in their conversion, and perfects it in glorification. Their peace now is liable to a great mixture of disturbance; but he will render it perfect at length, without the least trouble, Rev. xxi. 4.

3*dly*, He is the peaceful Prince, in the peaceful state of his kingdom, in the prosperity attending it. He is the true Solomon (peaceful); and no king of Israel had such a peaceable and prosperous reign as Solomon; that his kingdom might be a type of Christ's, the Prince of peace, as David's was a type of it in the wars thereof. And,

1. Every one of his subjects is, by his wise management, put in a state of peace; Micah iv. 4, "They shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid." He has procured them peace with God, among themselves, and within themselves; what then should discompose them? It is true, in the world they must have tribulation; but in their prince they have

peace to balance that, John xvi. 33. Having a good God, communion with good people, and a good conscience; they may, in peace, bear through all the troubles of a present evil world.

2. The peace of his kingdom is the fruit of war, and victory in that war. What made Solomon's reign so peaceable, was David's wars and victories. Our Lord Christ was a man of war; he fought and overcame sin, death, and the devil; and the peace of his kingdom now, is the fruit of that. The wicked's peace is the fruit of a conquest, like that of Issachar, who "saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute," Gen. xliv. 15; and like that of the strong man's keeping the house, in which case all things are at peace. So their peace is merely precarious; but God's people's peace is sure.

3. Hence in his kingdom is the greatest wealth and abundance. There is abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, which his subjects receive, Rom. v. 17; so that they are made a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The fruits of the victory over sin, death, and Satan are among them; they are enriched with the spoil of their enemies; free commerce is settled between heaven and them; and all that oppose their entrance into the heavenly Canaan, are overcome.

4. The good of his kingdom is advanced from all airths, and there is nothing but it is turned to the profit thereof, by the infinite wisdom of the Prince, Rom. viii. 28. Go matters what way they will, his kingdom is advanced by them; his subjects reap benefit by them. Out of the eater is brought forth meat by our Lord Jesus; yea, peace, order, and prosperity, out of war, by the Prince of peace. Is not that a prosperous kingdom that prospers in all emergencies?

5. *Lastly*, In end the peace of his kingdom will be absolute. Solomon's reign was more peaceable in the beginning of it, than toward the end. But Christ's kingdom is contrariwise: though indeed it will never end. But at last all occasion of disturbance from without or from within, will be utterly cut off.

Use 1. Is Jesus Christ presented and given to us the peaceful Prince, peaceful in action and operation, the procurer, maker, maintainer, restorer, and perfecter of peace? Then,

1. Sinners in a state of enmity with God, ye may have peace with God through him. There is a mediator of peace provided for you, able and willing to make up the peace betwixt God and you. This is the good news the Gospel brings, Luke ii. 14. If ye perish in a state of enmity with God, it is not because ye could not, but because ye would not have peace. There is nothing on heaven's part to

hinder the peace, but all is ready for it on that side, Matth. xxxii. 4. Therefore,

2. Apply yourself to the business of making your peace with God through him, 2 Cor. v. 20. Be no more at peace with yourselves, till ye be at peace with God through Christ.

Motive. 1. Ye are naturally in a state of enmity with God. So Adam left us all; and the breach is still made wider by actual sins, while unconverted. Ye have a real enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. If ye are not sensible of it, your works declare it, Col. i. 21. God bears a legal enmity against you, as rector of the world; even as a judge against a malefactor, whom in justice he must pursue and condemn, Psalm vii. 11—13.

Motive 2. While ye are at enmity with God, ye have not one fast friend in all the creation; so you are never safe. The very beasts, fowls, and creeping things, are your enemies, as enemies to their Creator, and are ready to dispatch you on the least signal from him, Hos. ii. 18, Job. v. 22, 23. Frogs, lice, &c. were employed to plague Pharaoh and his people, and worms to devour the bloody Herod. The meat thou eatest, and the drink thou swallowest, may be a means to choke thee, and send thee to the pit. The friendship of the world, being enmity with God, can never continue.

Motive 3. Ye are not able to make your part good against him. When the clay strives with the potter, it is easy to see who shall have the better. An angry God will be a party too strong for the stoutest sinner. And do ye not see how many, flushed with the world's smiles, forget God and themselves, and in a moment are dashed in pieces, and go out like the crackling of thorns under a pot? 1 Cor. x. 22. Infinite wisdom and power are what will be too hard a match for you; Job ix. 4, "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered." It is wisdom, then, to yield, and make peace with one with whom we are not able to war, Luke xiv. 31, 32.

Motive 4. Consider what losers ye are, while not at peace with God.

(1.) Ye lose all the advantages of commerce with heaven. When war breaks out betwixt nations, there is no more trade or commerce between them, all access to that is blocked up. So you have no access to import your prayers, desires, &c. into heaven, nor to export pardons, grace, &c. therefrom.

(2) You lose the sap and foyson of all you have in the world. There is a blasting, withering curse on it, Prov. iii. 33, Deut. xxviii. 17. Hence it will do you no good, but evil, Prov. i. 32. The very thought, that ye are at enmity with God, is sufficient to blast all your enjoyments.

(3.) You lose true peace within your own breast. Conscience is not your friend, since ye are at enmity with God. Therefore that joy, 2 Cor. i. 12, is a joy ye cannot intermeddle with. A sleep of conscience, which will have a fearful awakening, ye may have; but peace of conscience ye cannot have; Isa. lvii. 21, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

(4.) Ye will lose your souls in the end. That will be the issue of the war with Heaven; and what can countervail that loss? Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" That is to lose thyself; Luke ix. 25, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" The soul is the man.

Motive 5. The slighting of offered peace now, will make an eternal war against you, in the keenest manner. The peace is purchased by the blood of the Son of God; it is offered to you on free cost; if ye reject it, ye pour contempt on the blood of Christ, and the grace of God; and while God is God, he will pursue that quarrel, in a more fiery manner than if ye had never heard of peace; Matth. xi. 23, 24, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." 2 Thess. i. 7—9, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Wherefore consider what ye do, for life and death are here set before you; Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, "Fury is not in me; who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

Question. How may we get peace with God? Answer. Through the mediation of Christ; as those of Tyre and Sidon, in another case, made the king's chamberlain their friend, so do ye. It is through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25. That blood is held out to you as a covert to flee in under; and you will be wrapt up in that cover, by believing the efficacy of it to bring peace to sinners, and to you in particular, and wholly trusting on it for your peace with God. This implies a desire of peace with God, and a willingness to lay down your weapons of rebellion.

3. Saints, see here how you will get your peace maintained, restored, and perfected. You must be daily making use of Christ, his blood, intercession, and spirit, for maintaining it. What time it is broken, exercise faith anew, for restoring it; Psalm lxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." And hang on him for perfecting it.

Use 2. Is he the peaceful Prince, peaceful of disposition? Then,

1. Whosoever desire to employ him for peace, saints or sinners, be not frightened away from him, but come to him with holy boldness, as one who is a peaceful prince, of easy access, and ready to help; Heb. x. 22, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." There is love and good-will to wretched sinners of mankind in his heart and in his face; and it is the work of faith to perceive it, by means of the glass of the word, John i. 14.

Satan and an unbelieving heart hold him out to the trembling sinner to be an austere man, Luke xix. 21. And this is more rife in the world than we are aware of, it being the natural report of a guilty conscience concerning him. And hence men are ready to say, as Jer. ii. 25, "There is no hope." But oppose to that report of him, the report of the word; according to which he is the Prince of Peace; 1 John iv. 8, "God is love." Hang by this in all accusations of conscience, and believe it, Isa. liii. 1.

2. Then resemble him in that disposition, as ever ye would prove yourselves his subjects; 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Is he the peaceful prince; be ye peaceful men? Heb. xii. 14, "Follow peace with all men." He bids you learn it of him; Matth. xi. 29, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Nay, if ye be not men of peace, ye are none of his, Isa. xi. 6. The proud, fiery, mischievous spirit that some are possessed with, evidence them to be none of his, Tit. iii. 3.

Use 3. Is he the peaceful Prince in the prosperous state of his kingdom? Then,

1. Let his enemies, and those of his church and people, know, that their attempts against the same shall be in vain, and shall return on their own heads, according to that promise, Zech. xii. 3, "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." There is a peace of his kingdom that they cannot reach to take away; John xiv. 27, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

2. Let his friends rejoice in his peace and prosperity, by faith,

Rom. xv. 13, particularly knowing that his kingdom shall prosper over the belly of opposition, yea, that it shall prosper by means that threaten to overthrow it, as in the case of Paul's sufferings, Phil. i. 12; that their particular trials shall promote their prosperity, John xv. 2; and that in him they may have peace in the midst of trouble, John xvi. 33.

3. *Lastly*, Join yourselves to this prosperous and peaceful prince and kingdom. Great is the noise of wars and commotions through the nations, strong confederacies on all hands a-forming. Join ye the Prince of Peace in the covenant of Grace; and ye shall have peace, though all should be in red war, Psalm xlvi. 1—4.

Thus Christ has been directly commended to you.

(1.) Do ye believe the report that has been made of Christ to you from the word, or not? that he is indeed the "Wonderful One, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace?" that he is presented, yea, given to you of the Father? If ye do, I am sure the vain world, and your lusts, will be sunk in their value with you. If they be not, it is an evidence it is not believed, Isa. liii. 1.

(2.) Will ye take him or not, for and instead of all? If ye do, let these go away, Luke xiv. 26. He will be your "Wonderful One," your "Counsellor," &c. If ye will not, be it known to you, you refuse Heaven's present to you, you cast back its gift made to you, and ye must answer it.

## THE UNSUCCESSFULNESS OF THE GOSPEL, THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL-REPORT, THE RARITY OF BELIEVING IT, AND THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE POWER IN ORDER TO FAITH.*

ISAIAH liii. 1,

*Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*

NONE spoke so much of Christ as this evangelical prophet. He had been speaking of him in the former chapter, verse 13, and downward, and he was to speak more of him here. But in the words now read, he makes a melancholy reflection on the cold entertainment the word met with in his own time, and would meet with in after times.

* Several sermons preached at Ettrick, in the year 1726.

The words are a heavy complaint and lamentation. And if we consider,

1*st*, To whom it was made. We find from parallel scriptures that it is made to the Lord himself; John xii. 38, Rom. x. 16, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" &c. From powerful preaching he betakes himself to mournful prayer, lamenting the unsuccessfulness of his message.

2*dly*, Whom it respects. It respects the hearers of the Gospel in his own time, and in after times too; John xii. 37, 38, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The Jews, to whom Christ himself preached; and both Jews and Gentiles, to whom the apostles preached, Rom. x. 16. No wonder then it extend to those to whom ministers now preach.

3*dly*, The matter of this heavy lamentation.

1. The unsuccessfulness of the Gospel, and prevailing unbelief among them that heard it. Where consider,

(1.) What the Gospel is. It is a report; a report from heaven, brought by Christ himself, the apostles, and prophets, to be believed unto salvation. The word signifies "a hearing," *i.e.* a thing to be heard and received by faith, as a voice is received and heard by the ear. Hence is that expression, the hearing of faith, Gal. iii. 2.

(2.) What faith is. It is a believing that report. The word rendered believing, doth properly signify to trust. So it is in the Hebrew, "Who hath trusted to our report?" Faith is a giving credit to the Gospel, and a trusting our souls to it, as on a word that cannot fail.

(3.) How rare that faith is; who hath believed? Few, very few have believed the report. It is brought to multitudes; but where is the man that really trusts it, as news from heaven that may be relied on? They are but here and there one who trust it; the generality regard it but as idle tales.

2. The great withdrawing of the power of God from ordinances; "And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The arm of the Lord is the power of God; and this arm is said to be revealed or uncovered, when it exerts itself in acting powerfully; as men put up their sleeves when they are putting themselves in order for working with the hand. And this implies three things.

(1.) That there is a necessity of the mighty power of God being exerted on a man, to cause him believe; John vi. 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." The trust-

ing to the report of the Gospel is so far from being an easy effort of imagination, that it is beyond the power of nature.

(2.) That few, very few, felt this power. To whom? (Heb.) Upon whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? The Gospel was but an empty sound to the most part; they found not the power of the spirit coming along with it.

(3.) That hence so very few believed. Where there is no feeling of that power, there is no believing. First the arm of the Lord must draw, ere the sinner can come; therefore these two are of equal latitude; Eph. i. 19, "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." Four doctrines are deducible from the words.

Doctrine I. The little success of the Gospel, and great rarity of divine power coming along with Gospel ordinances, will be matter of heavy lamentation to the godly, and particularly to godly ministers.

Doctrine II. The Gospel is a report from heaven, to be believed and trusted to for salvation.

Doctrine III. Though many hear, yet few believe or trust to the report of the Gospel.

Doctrine IV. There is no true believing or trusting to the report of the Gospel, but what is the effect of the working of a divine power on the soul for that end.

We shall handle each of these doctrines in order.

Doctrine I. The little success of the Gospel, and great rarity of divine power coming along with Gospel ordinances, will be matter of heavy lamentation to the godly, and particularly to godly ministers.

In discoursing this doctrine I shall show,

I. What is that success which the Gospel sometimes hath?

II. What is that divine power which sometimes comes along with Gospel ordinances.

III. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

What is that success which the Gospel sometimes hath? We may take it up in these two generals. It is successful,

1. When sinners are thereby brought to faith in Christ, Rom. i. 17. The Gospel is a good report of Christ the bridegroom of souls, spread in the world; and then the end of it is gained, when the sinner is brought to behold him so altogether lovely, as that he gives up with all his former lovers, and is married to him, to be his only, wholly, and for ever, Psalm lxxiii. 25.

2. When they are thereby brought to holiness of life; when they

are transformed into the image of him in whom they have believed, 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is a holy gospel, and true believers of it are cast into the mould of it, Rom. vi. 17.; and being united to Christ, "put on Christ," Gal. iii. 27, walking as personating him, 1 John ii. 6. These things are so excellent, that it is very lamentable there is so little of them among men.

II. What is that divine power which sometimes comes along with Gospel ordinances? There is,

1. A heart and life discovering power, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. The word comes, and the Lord's arm comes with it, and opens the volume of a man's heart and life; and it is as if the preacher were reading the secret history of a man's thoughts and actions; Heb. iv. 12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This is called the watchman's finding the spouse, Cant. iii. 3.

2. A sharp convincing power, whereby the sinner does not only see his sin, but sees the ill and danger of it, and is touched to the heart with it; Acts xxiv. 25. That is the finger of God at the man's heart, according to John xvi. 7, 8, "When the Spirit is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." So it was with these; Acts ii. 37, "They were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And O, it is promising when men are sent home with a breast full of convictions from the word. But if that arm of the Lord be not revealed, one will be very easy, come the word never so close to his case.

3. A drawing and converting power; John xii. 32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Psalm xix. 7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." While the word comes, some secret power comes along, that the man is not able to resist it; but the iron gate of the heart is loosed, and of its own accord opens wide, to receive the King of glory. Such a power Zaccheus felt with that word, "Come down," that made his heart, which was like a strong castle to keep out Christ, come as fast down, as ever an old house did being undermined; Luke xix. 5. While this comes not, sinners will not come to Christ; John v. 40.

4. A quickening power; Psalm cxix. 50, "Thy word hath quickened me." Sometimes the spiritual senses have all been bound up, that the soul could neither see, hear, taste, smell, nor feel spiritually, more than it had been dead; and a word has been dropt in with such a power, that it has been like the barley-cake tumbling down on the tents of Midian, or like the honey Jonathan tasted in the

wood; it has cleared their eyes, unstopped their ears, &c. Cant. vii. 9. While this is wanting, the word cannot awaken people.

5. A clearing power, resolving doubts, removing mistakes and darkness in certain particulars, whereby one is retarded in their spiritual course; Psalm xix. 7, 8. Many a time souls have been so embarrassed with some doubts or mistakes, that they have thereby been made to go like a fettered bird, perhaps many a day and year; till at length they have got a word with such power, that it has made these their fetters fall off, like Peter's chains when the angel gave him a touch on the side; Acts xii. 7. Cornelius had sweet experience of it; Acts x. 6—44. While the power comes not, they come and go with their chains on them.

6. A comforting power; Psalm cxix, 49, 50, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." Discouragement is a great load; the discouraged soul is like one going with a clog at his heels. Great pressures of affliction are apt to discourage, make the heart faint, the hands weak, and the knees feeble; but sometimes the word comes with such power, as that it stays the fainting soul; Psalm cxix. 92, "Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction." Sometimes such a high spring-tide of power comes with the word, that the clog drops off, and the affliction that was so heavy is not the weight of a feather, but the man rejoices in the Lord, and leaps like an hart; Isa. xii. 3. For the comfort of the word has loosed all his bands; Rom. xv. 13; Heb. x. 34.

7. A strengthening power; Psalm xcvi. 6, "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." Sometimes a man has great temptations to conflict with, and he knows not how to stand before them; till he come to the sanctuary with Asaph; Psalm lxxiii. 16, 17, and with Paul get a word with power; 2 Cor. xii. 7. Then he is like a giant refreshed with wine, and in the strength of that word goes out like David against Goliah. The Spirit with the word breathing on the dry bones, makes them stand on their feet like a great army.

8. *Lastly*, A soul-elevating and heart-ravishing power; Luke xxiv. 32, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Sometimes such a power has come along with the word, as if in heaven, not a window only, but a door had been opened; that the man has made no doubt to say, Gen. xxviii. 16, 17, "Surely the Lord is in this place.—This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." And Christ has come so near him, as he could tell what was the smell of his garments; Psalm xlv. 8; and the

sermon or communion place would have been gladly embraced as the dying place; Luke ii. 29.

III. The *third* thing is, The reasons of the point. And,

1*st*, It must be matter of lamentation to the godly in general. For,

1. The honour of Christ is thereby overclouded. He is not honoured, but highly dishonoured by sinners disbelieving the report of him, not receiving him in the gospel-offer; John viii. 49. Hence it was a part of Christ's humiliation, that his report out of his own mouth was not believed; John xii. 37, 38; and after his exaltation his apostles were to do greater works than he; John xiv, 12. And when he goes forth in the gospel conquering, a crown is said to be given him; Rev. vi. 2. But that crown is obscured in a time of the gospel's unsuccessfulness. And Christ's honour will be dear to the godly, whatever it be to others; and the affronts done him by unbelievers, will lie near their hearts.

2. The glory of the glorious gospel is thereby vailed. The gospel is in itself glorious; 2 Cor. iv. 4; 1 Tim. i. 11. It is a radiant jewel, of greater worth than all the glory of the world; but the glory of it is hid, while it is not believed, and divine power does not accompany it; therefore having "free course," it is said to be "glorified," 2 Thess. iii. 1. And this cannot but affect the godly, who relish the gospel.

3. Souls are thereby lost, while salvation is come to their door. The gospel brings salvation; but none can share of it where it is not believed; Heb. iv. 2. What a lamentable sight it is to see men slighting and despising their own misery; neglecting the great salvation; continuing filthy still under means of cleansing; growing worse, by the means of grace doing them no good; and finally, aggravating their own condemnation; John xv. 22.

4. The godly themselves suffer loss. The stronger Christ's family is, the better thriven are the children; and contrariwise. The calling of the Jews will be as "life from the dead;" Rom. xi. 15. The saints in the worst of times will always get as much as will keep in their life; Micah ii. 7. But there is a difference between fend and fare well. If there were more converting, there would be more confirming work too.

2*dly*, And particularly to godly ministers. For,

1. Thereby their care and pains is much lost, and in vain. To toil all night and catch nothing, is a heavy task. Ministers are like candles; while they give light to others, they waste themselves. And that is a heavy tale; Isa. xlix. 4, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." O there is much

need of faith in the work of the ministry! The husbandman, shepherd and tradesman, sees ordinarily the fruit of his labours; if it miss at one time, it will readily prosper at another; but there is much spiritual seed sown, where there is no visible fruit.

2. Thereby their work is rendered more difficult and wearisome. When the arm of the Lord is revealed to carry on the work on men's souls and consciences, it is made lightsome; they are then like a ship going with a fair wind. But when the Spirit is withdrawn, they are like the ship in a dead calm, that takes much strength to work her, and yet she comes but little speed.

3. *Lastly*, Thereby the seals of their ministry are but small. They are the savour of death to many, the savour of life to few; for the one or the other they will be to all; 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. If they be not, by men's receiving their testimony, instruments to further their salvation, they will be witnesses against them, to aggravate their condemnation.

Use. Then let it teach our hearts, and cause us to lament, that there is so little success of the gospel, and so great a rarity of divine power coming along with ordinances at this day in the land, and among us. Of this there are several evidences.

Evidence 1. The slighting of gospel-ordinances that so much prevails. How easy is it for many to sit at home, and make to themselves silent Sabbaths, while the Lord puts an opportunity in their hands to attend ordinances! for others if they be but touched against the grain, and disobliged, to cast them off for good and all! A sad evidence the gospel has had little success or power with them; for the experience of the power would give men a higher value for them than to neglect them; Psalm lxiii. 1, 2, and lxxxiv. 1—3.

2. Little reformation of life under the dispensation of the gospel. Ministers may say with Jeremiah; chap. vi. 10, "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken; behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. He that was filthy, is filthy still." The glass of the word is held before men's eyes, that they cannot but see their spots; yet do they not wipe them off. Under the gospel of the grace of God they live ungodly lives; in the land of uprightness they deal unjustly; rebelling against the light.

3. Much formality in attendance on ordinances; Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. People satisfy themselves with the work done. Few take heed how they hear. They seek not to be spiritual in the work, to have communion with God in ordinances, nor do they mourn when they obtain it not. They do not miss the power of God in ordinances; or if they do, they can easily bear the want.

4. *Lastly*, Little of the work of conversion or soul-exercise in our day. The gospel is the great mean of conversion, of bringing sinners into a state of grace; but converts are rare. Conviction, compunction, and humiliation, are rarely made now by the word; and rarely issued in kindly conversion to God. Sometime the word would have raised soul-exercise in them that heard it, and the word again would have brought the Christian's exercise to a happy issue; but, alas! that is seldom the case now.

Now this may be for a lamentation, that it is so; that there is so little success attending the dispensation of gospel-ordinances, and that there is a great rarity of divine power coming along with them. For,

1. This says, that the Lord is in a great measure departed from us, ministers and people; Isa. lxiv. 7, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities." We may lament, that he is become "as a stranger in the land;" Jer. xiv. 8. Ordinances are the trysting-places where he is to be met with; and when he is so little found there, it is time to lament his departure. We may say, as 2 Kings ii. 14, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" We have the chair of state; but where is the King himself? Here is the napkin and linen clothes lying, but where is the Lord that was wrapt in them?

2. That we have sinned away his presence; Isa. lix. 1, 2, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." When the glory departed to the threshold, Ezek. x. 4, from the threshold, ver. 18, from the midst of the city to the mountain, chap. xi. 23, it was for the abominations done in the house; chap. viii. Why doth he loath our sacrifices, refuse to smell in our assemblies, but because we have made ourselves and them vile before him? Isaiah i. 11—17. Had we entertained the blowings of his Spirit when we had them, he had not left us in such a dead calm.

3. That the Lord has a controversy with us, that we are not yet convinced of, and humbled for; Hos. v. 15. People may be long under the Lord's withdrawings, so far insensible of the causes thereof, as not to be lamenting over them; 1 Sam. vii. 2. Now there is no convincing us of the causes of God's controversy. But if ever the Lord return to ordinances as heretofore, ye will see there will be a convincing and humbling influence, that will bring ministers and people to their knees, taking shame to themselves.

4. That wrath and heavy judgments are abiding us, come from what airth they will; Matth. iii. 10. It is not to be thought, that

the contempt of the gospel, and unfruitfulness under it, will be passed without some special mark of the divine indignation. When the invitations to the gospel feast prevail not, the King's armies are sent forth to destroy; Matth. xxii. 7. When the white flag of peace is contemned, the red flag of war is hung out.

5. That these judgments will be very sore when they come, according to the measure of light sinned against. Capernaum exalted to heaven, is thrust down to hell; Matth. xi. 23. After the white horse, the red and black follow; Rev. vi. Never did a generation enjoy such a clear light of the gospel as the Jews in the time of our Saviour and the apostles, and accordingly wrath came to an extremity, to the uttermost; 1 Thess. ii. 16.

6. *Lastly*, That it is high time to be lamenting after the Lord, and wrestling and supplicating for his return to ordinances. Stir up yourselves therefore unto this, that it be not said as Isaiah lxiv. 7, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." Consider,

1. It is a sad sign to be unconcerned about it. It speaks, (1.) Such a one to be a stranger to the experience of the power of the word, and the precious enjoyment of communion with God in ordinances; Psalm lxiii. 1, 2. (2.) To be too easily satisfied in the matters of God with the husks, the shadows, instead of the foyson and substance. (3.) To be unacquainted with Christ, and none of his; since the withdrawing of his presence is not heavy to him. (4.) That they could even be content Christ would never come again; for they that relish not his coming in ordinances, can never relish his second coming.

2. Great would be the advantage of his return to ordinances. (1.) It would be well for particular hearers of the gospel who should share in it themselves. Strangers would be converted, and converts strengthened. Duties would be a delight. Whereas a form of godliness is all that can be reached otherwise. (2.) It would be well for the church in general; it would cure our divisions; all being by that means brought to acknowledge their offences, and return to the Lord, and so to one another in him.

Doctrine II. The gospel is a report from heaven to be believed and trusted to for salvation.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall consider,

I. The gospel as it is a report.

II. Faith as it is a trusting to this report.

III. The report of the gospel, and the trusting to it, conjunctly.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. We shall consider the gospel as it is a report. And here we shall view it,

1*st*, In the nature of a report in general.

2*dly*, In the nature of a report to be trusted to, for some valuable end.

*First*, We shall view the gospel in the nature of a report in general. And,

1. There is the subject of a report, or the thing that is reported, viz. some design, action, or event, true or false. The subject of the gospel-report is, a love-design in God for the salvation of sinners of mankind, 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. Such was the gospel-report that was first made in the world, Gen. iii. 15. It is the report of an act of grace and kindness in God, in favour of them, whereby he has given them his Son for a Saviour, John iii. 16, Isa. ix. 6, and eternal life in him, 1 John v. 11. The report of the event of Christ's dying for sinners, and a crucified Christ's being ready for marriage with sinners; Matth. xxii. 4. A subject of the utmost importance.

2. There is the place whence the report originally comes. And the place here is heaven, the bosom of the Father. Hence the gospel is called heavenly things; John iii. 12, revealed from the bosom of the Father. The original place of a report is the place of the transaction, and that at some distance from where it is reported. So,

(1.) The gospel is a report from heaven, where the design of love was contrived, the gift of the Son was made, and from whence he came to die for sinners, and where he is ready to match with them. The gospel may come from one place of the earth to another, as it did from Jerusalem to other places of the world; Isa. ii. 3; Luke xxiv. 47. But it came from heaven originally, Luke ii. 13, 14.

(2.) The gospel is good news from a far country, and so should be as acceptable as cold water to the thirsty; Prov. xxv. 25. The farther off a country is from whence a report comes, we think ourselves the less concerned in it; and so do carnal men treat the gospel-report. Far indeed it is; but as far as it is, we must spend our eternity in it, or else in hell; and therefore it does most nearly concern us.

3. The matter of a report is something unseen to them to whom the report is made. And so is the matter of the gospel-report. It is an unseen God, John i. 18; an unseen Saviour, 1 Pet. i. 8; and unseen things, 2 Cor. iv. 18, that are preached unto you by the gospel. So the gospel is an object of faith, not of sight; Heb. xi. 1. We receive it by hearing, not by seeing; Isa. lv. 3. It is not what we credit on our eye-sight, but upon the testimony of another, viz.

of God. Hence the carnal world are fond on seen objects; Psalm iv. 6. but slow to believe the gospel.

4. There is a reporter or reporters. And in this case the report is made by many. But,

(1.) The first-hand reporter is an eye-witness, viz. Jesus Christ. Christ himself was the raiser of the report of the gospel; Heb. ii. 3. And who else could have been so? John i. 18. What he reported he saw, and gives us his testimony of the truth of it on his eyesight; John iii. 11. Hence he is proposed to us as the faithful and true witness; Rev. iii. 14. who was from eternity privy to the whole design revealed to us in the gospel.

(2.) The prophets and apostles, and ministers of the gospel. They are the second-hand reporters. The former had it immediately from Christ, the latter from them again. But none of them were eye-witnesses, but ear-witnesses properly speaking. For even the apostles who saw Christ with their eyes, yet owed their knowledge of the gospel to their faith originally, though they were confirmed by what they saw; John i. 14. So it is determined; Psalm lxviii. 11, "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it."

5. *Lastly*, There is a manifestation of the thing by the report, to the parties to whom the report is made. So is the grace of God to poor sinners, manifested to them by the gospel; 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. It is no more kept a secret from them, but they are let into the knowledge of the design, action, and events, which concern their salvation. The gospel opens up and reveals the secret of God's grace to sinners, with the method of communicating it, even the whole plan of salvation, which from eternity was hid in the breast of God, John i. 18. Let us view the gospel,

*Secondly*, In the nature of a report to be trusted to, for some valuable end. And so it is,

1. A true and faithful report, that one may safely trust; 1 Tim. i. 15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It was originally brought from heaven by Jesus Christ; Heb. ii. 3. the faithful and true witness; Rev. iii. 14. Many false reports are going in the world; and those that are brought from afar, we are not in capacity to contradict; but the truth of the gospel has been confirmed by the greatest evidence, particularly by the death of Christ, and by the experience of the believers of it in all ages.

2. An infallible report. A report may be true where there is no infallibility; but the report of the gospel is an infallible truth, Acts i. 3, for it is the word of God that cannot lie; 1 Thess. ii. 13.

Though men bring it to you, God has put it in their mouths from his written word; and the speaker is Christ himself, they are but the voice. And the Spirit of the Lord demonstrates it to believers, as divine truth; 1 Cor. ii. 4.

3. A good and comfortable report. It is not only good in itself, as the report of the law's curse is; but it is good for us. Hence it is called good or glad tidings, Luke ii. 10. As the contrivance of salvation is stated in the gospel, it is adapted in all points to our case. And the convinced sinner, helped to believe, sees it so; that it is a good report of God, bringing the contrivance every way good for him.

(4.) *Lastly*, A weighty report, even of the greatest weight, as concerning man's greatest possible interest, Isa. lxi. 1. It concerns a man's eternal interest, how he may be saved from the wrath of God, and made happy for evermore.

II. We shall consider faith as it is a trusting to this report, the report of the gospel. And so it is not only divine faith, but saving justifying faith, Rom. x. 8, 9. It may be taken up in these two. Faith is,

1*st*, A trusting of the gospel-report as true. It is a believing of the doctrine of the gospel; Acts viii. 37. Faith is the soul's echo to the joyful sound. That Christ came to save sinners is true, saith the gospel; true, saith faith. Hence the gospel is called a hearing in our text, and the hearing of faith; Gal. iii. 2. The voice from without entering the ear, is conceived and sounds there; the voice of the gospel entering the heart, is conceived and sounds like an echo, from the heart; and that is faith; Rom. x. 9. When a word is heard that one does not believe, there is as it were a repelling it from within; and it is all one to the purpose of the speaker, as if it were not heard at all. So unbelief repels the gospel-testimony, receives it not as true; 1 John v. 10. But faith receives it as true; and the speaker so far gains his design. And faith trusts it as true,

1. In the general, with respect to the multitude whom it concerns; 1 Tim. i. 15, "It is a faithful saying, Christ came to save sinners." Here is the gospel; here is faith's assent to it as true with respect to sinners in general. It is the report of a common good, the common salvation for sinners of mankind. The great body of mankind looks on it as idle tales; but faith receives it as a true report; and admires the love of God to fallen man, and not to fallen angels.

2. In particular, with respect to one's self; 1 Tim. i. 15, "This is a faithful saying, that Christ came to save sinners; of whom I am the chief." Here is the application of faith, without which the report of the gospel is not trusted as true; He came to save me.

Faith believes there is a fulness in Christ for poor sinners, and for one's self in particular; that Christ and all his salvation is in earnest offered to sinners, and to one's self in particular; that he is the Saviour of the world, and their Saviour in particular, John iv. 42, "We know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the; world." Chap xx. 28, "Thomas said unto him, My Lord and my God." This is evident, if ye consider, that the gospel comprehends you, and every one of you; John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Prov. viii. 4, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man." If then you do not believe it with respect to yourself, if you should believe it with respect to all the world besides, ye disbelieve it; ye deny credit to it, in that which is the main point for your salvation; 1 John v. 10. 11. You believe in that case no more than devils do; Mark i. 24. Nay, you do not believe so much as the devils do; for they cannot help believing your interest in the gospel, as well as the interest of others: and therefore are at so much pains to keep you from believing it, lest ye be saved; if ye had no interest in it, they would tell you so much for your torment.

Object. But where is it written in the gospel, that Christ came to save me, or that he is my Saviour? I am sure my name is not in it. I may believe the gospel then, though I do not believe it to hold with respect to myself.

Answ. Where is it written in the law, that Adam ruined you? I am sure your name is neither in the commands of the law, nor in the curse of it either. But do you think you could indeed believe the law, without believing its commands and curse reaching you? No; if ye believe not that, you contradict the express terms of the law; Gal. iii. 10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." O, but say ye, I am comprehended in the curse as a breaker of the law; true, but are ye not as much comprehended in the gospel as a son of Adam? Prov. viii. 4; is not the promise of the gospel in as extensive terms (John iii. 16,) as the curse of the law?

Wherefore, let none deceive themselves, thinking they believe the gospel, while they believe it not with particular application to themselves. True faith trusts the gospel as true, with respect to one's self; and so trusts it,

1. As certain truth. It does not receive the gospel-report only as a thing that is probable, and likely to be true. That is opinion and conjecture, not faith. Faith embraceth the gospel as certain truth,

as a thing one is sure there is no falsehood in; John vi. 69, "We believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Paul was so much persuaded of the truth of the gospel, that he could declare an angel accursed that should contradict it; Gal. i. 8, 9.

2. As infallible truth, as a thing there can be no falsehood in. The reason of which is, That faith trusts the gospel as the testimony of God himself that cannot lie, 1 Thess. ii. 13. It receives the joyful sound as the voice of God, John iii. 33. To believe the gospel because good ministers and good books say so, or because it appears agreeable to our reason, is not faith, but opinion. Faith believes it, because God says so. The tidings of the gospel are beyond our sight, and above our reason, as the mystery of an incarnate God, an imputed righteousness, &c. But because we see the divine testimony for these things, therefore we believe them by true faith, just on the credit of God's word, Mark xvi. 15. Hence it appears,

1. That there is an assurance in the nature of faith, whereby the believing person is sure of the truth of the doctrine of the gospel, and that with respect to himself particularly; 1 Thess. i. 2, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." So that whatever were his doubts of it, and carnal reasonings against it, he is brought at length to assent thereto as most firm truth.

2. That there is a necessity of an inward illumination by the Spirit, in order to the faith of the gospel, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 10, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." The Spirit of the Lord opens the eyes, and demonstrates the truth of the gospel to the soul; ver. 4, "My speech, and my preaching, was —in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power;" otherwise there is no reaching the divine faith of it; ver. 5, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." This casts down the man's carnal reasonings against it, and awes him and overcomes him into a belief of the truth; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Quest. Is there no doubting then consistent with the faith of the report of the gospel? Answ. All doubting is contrary to faith; Matth. xxi. 21. But since faith is not perfect more than other graces, it may have a mixture of its contrary; chap. xiv. 31, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Howbeit, the more doubting, the less faith; and the more faith, the less doubting. As long as doubting is predominant in the soul to be brought to Christ, there is no faith. But the Spirit of the Lord lays in a weight

of light, and the balance is cast on the side of the truth of the gospel, and the doubting is downweighed, and faith springs up in the soul. The soul is assured of the truth of the gospel, appearing in his venturing himself for eternity upon it, in the sight of a holy, just God; though perhaps he is not without all doubting; as there may be a moving of the heavier scale by the lighter weight, though the balance is fully casten.

2*dly*, There is in faith a trusting to the gospel-report as good. Faith does not only trust the gospel, but trusts to it, trusts much to it, lays stress on it, not only as a true, but also as a good thing. Faith,

1. Looks on the gospel as a good thing in itself, and desirable. For it is done with the heart; Rom. x 10. Look how a Saviour, a righteousness, and a pardon, must needs be good things in the eyes of sinners seeing themselves lost; so the gospel that brings these to sinners, must needs appear good. As the belief of the report of the law, imports not only an assent to it as true, but a horror of it as evil; so the belief of the report of the gospel imports not only an assent thereto as true, but a relish thereof as good. So it is holden out to faith under the notion of good; Isaiah lv. 2, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

2. Faith looks on the gospel as good for one's self in particular. The believing soul says, This is good news, and good for me; 1 Tim. i. 15, "Worthy of all acceptation." When there is a report of a physician come to a country that infallibly cures such and such a disease, the whole people say, That is good; but the sick of these diseases say more, That is good for me. What makes one think a thing good for him, is the suitableness of it to his mind and case. Many hearers of the Gospel may account the Gospel good in itself, but they do not look on it as good for them, at least as yet: as one who may account some kind of meat good, but he is not for it. He has better before him, more agreeable to his stomach; or perhaps he has no stomach for the time, so it must be set up. Thus Christ is good, and his salvation; but the man has the world and his lusts to feed on, that are more agreeable to him; let them stay off till death, and then he will be for them. But the Gospel is to the believer not only good in itself, but good for him, and that just now.

And so he trusts to it as good for him. And if ye ask, what it is that he trusts to it? Why, he trusts his salvation to it, in a word; for that is it the gospel brings to sinners, Tit. ii. 11. marg. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared." And the trust of faith relates to it; Eph. i. 12, 13, "That we should

be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." The soul sees itself lost; the gospel offers salvation. And faith thereupon trusts for it, Acts xvi. 31. Even for Christ's whole salvation. Which may be taken up in these two.

1. The relative part of it; which comprehends the soul's justification, reconciliation, adoption, and all other benefits of the like kind. These the gospel offers, together with the righteousness of Christ, upon which they are founded; and faith trusts to it for all these; Rom. i. 17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."

2. The real part of it; which comprehends the soul's sanctification and glorification, and all other benefits of that kind. These also the gospel offers, together with the Spirit of Christ, by whom they are to be wrought in sinners; and faith trusts to it for all these, Gal. iii. 2.

Thus faith lays the greatest of weight on the report of the gospel, even the weight of the man's salvation for time and eternity; dealing with God for that his greatest interest, in the way of trust on his word of the gospel; trusting to that report for his own salvation in particular; Acts xv. 11, "But we believe, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved."

Now, as faith is a trusting to the report of the gospel for one's own salvation, according as salvation is offered in the gospel, it implies these following things.

1. Not only a willingness, but a sincere desire to be sanctified, and delivered from sin, as well as to be justified, and delivered from wrath; to be delivered from the reigning power, practice, pollution, and inbeing of sin, as well as from the guilt of it; Rom. vii. 24, 25, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." A person may fear from one what he does not desire; but what he desires not, he cannot trust in one for. Therefore where there is no such desire, there is no trusting to the gospel, there is no faith.

2. A renouncing of all other confidence for his salvation. Faith trusting to the report of the gospel, quits self-confidence, law-confidence, and creature-confidence; Jer. xvi. 19, "O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision, which have no confidence in the flesh?" like the woman with the bloody issue, who quit all her physicians, trusting for healing to a touch of the hem of Christ's garment.

3. A hearty approbation of the way of salvation manifested in the report of the gospel; Matth. xi. 6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Faith here views Christ in the glass of the gospel as a crucified Saviour; 1 Cor. ii. 2; believes his sufficiency as such to save sinners, and them in particular, from sin, and from the wrath of a holy God, in the eye of the holy law, and to make them completely holy and happy; Phil. iii. 9; and acquiesceth in that way for their own salvation; 1 Cor. i. 24.

4. A betaking one's self entirely to that way of salvation, by trusting to it wholly for our own salvation; Ruth ii. 12. Even as a poor beggar, having riches and wealth made over to him by his friend, leaves off his begging, and betakes himself to that entirely for his throughbearing. This is the soul's coming to Christ, fleeing for refuge, receiving the atonement, and rolling its burden on him.

5. *Lastly*, A confidence and trust that he will save us from sin and wrath, according to his promise; Acts xv. 11, "We believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved." This is that trust which shall never be disappointed; Rom. x. 11, that building on Christ which shall never fall; 1 Pet. ii. 6.

III. We shall consider the report of the gospel, and the trusting to it conjunctly.

1. The gospel is a report from heaven, of salvation for poor sinners, from sin; Matth. i. 21; and from the wrath of God; John iii. 16, however dear bought, yet freely made over to you in the word of promise; so as that ye may freely take possession of it; Isaiah lv. 1.

This report being brought to the sinner, faith trusts it as a true report, believing that God has said it; and trusts to it as good, laying our own salvation upon it. So the soul greedily embraceth the Saviour, and the salvation brought to it in that report, as ever a drowning man would take hold of a rope let down to bring him out of the waters; Cant. i. 3.

2. The gospel is the report of a crucified Christ made over to sinners, as the device of heaven for their salvation. It is proclaimed by the authority of heaven that Christ has died, and by his death purchased life and salvation for lost children of Adam; and that they and every one of them may have full and free access to him; Matth. xxii. 4.

Faith trusting this report as good and true, the soul concludes, The Saviour is mine; and leans on him for all the purchase of his death, for life and salvation to itself in particular; 1 Cor. ii. 2.

3. The gospel is the report of a righteousness wherein we guilty ones may stand before a holy God; Rom. i. 17, "For therein is the

righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." And by faith one believes there is such a righteousness, that it is sufficient to cover him, and that is held out to him to be trusted on for righteousness; and so the believer trusts it as his righteousness in the sight of God, disclaiming all other, and betaking himself to it alone; Gal. ii. 16.

4. The gospel is the report of a pardon under the great seal of heaven, in Christ, to all who will take it in him; Acts xiii. 38, 39, "Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." This pardon is proclaimed openly by the authority of Heaven, full and free, without exception of any of lost Adam's race, to whom the report comes.

The soul by faith believes this to be true, and applies it to itself, saying, This pardon is for me; it is good and suitable to my case; I will therefore lean to this word of grace for my pardon, and come in, for this is the word of God that cannot lie.

5. The gospel is the report of a Physician that cures infallibly all the diseases of the soul; Matth. ix. 12, 13; Heb. vii. 26, and freely; Hos. xiv. 4; and rejects no patients; John vi. 37.

The soul believes it, and applies it to its own case; and says, Then I will trust him for the removing the stony heart out of my flesh, for curing me of the falling evil of backsliding, the fever of raging corruption, the running issue of the predominant lust, and the universal leprosy of the corruption of my nature.

6. The gospel is the report of a feast for hungry souls, Isa. xxv. 6, to which all are bid welcome, Christ himself being the maker and matter of it too; Isa. lv. 2.

The soul, weary of the husks of created things, and believing this report, accordingly falls a-feeding on Christ, his flesh which is meat indeed, and his blood which is drink indeed; believing and applying to itself all that Christ was, did, and suffered, as that whereof the soul shall reap the benefit; which is the feeding by faith on a slain Saviour.

7. The gospel is the report of a treasure; 2 Cor. iv. 7. In it are the precious promises, within them precious Christ, with his merit, like the gold mentioned; Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich." The field it is hid in, may be yours; Matth. xiii. 44; the gospel offers you the covenant as that field.

Faith believes the report; and the soul lays hold on the covenant, and trusts entirely to the treasure hid there for the payment of all its debt, for its throughbearing during life, and through death, and for procuring it eternal happiness.

8. The gospel is the report of a victory won by Jesus Christ over sin, Satan, and death, and the world; Psalm xcviii. 1, and that in favour of all that will join the glorious Conqueror.

Faith believes this report; and the soul trusts to it for its victory over all these, as already foiled enemies; 1 John v. 4. To name no more,

9, *Lastly*, The gospel is the report of a peace purchased by the blood of Christ for poor sinners; Eph. ii. 14, and offered to them; Isa. xxvii. 5.

Faith believes it; and trusting to it, the soul comes before God as a reconciled Father in Christ, brings in its supplications for supply before the throne, believing the communication to be opened betwixt heaven and them, which during the war was blocked up.

Use 1. Of information. This shews, that,

1. The gospel is the mean of divine appointment for the salvation of sinners. Therefore it is called "the gospel of our salvation," Eph. i. 13, and to "bring salvation," Tit. ii. 11. The light of nature is not the external mean or instrument of salvation; for it brings no report of Christ; Acts iv. 12. The law is not it neither; it is the "ministration of death and condemnation;" 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9; but the gospel only; for it is in the gospel only that a righteousness is revealed for the unrighteous; Rom. i. 16, 17, and in which the Spirit is conveyed to dead sinners; Gal. iii. 2. To slight the gospel, then, is to slight the only mean of salvation.

2. The gospel, however, will not be of any saving effect to us without faith; Heb. iv. 2, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." The gospel is the net; but the soul is not catched, to be drawn out of the waters of wrath, until it believe; 1 Cor. i. 21, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." If the gospel be hid to us, it is an evidence we are yet lost; and it remains hid to all unbelievers, who see not the truth, goodness, nor glory of the gospel.

3. The gospel-method of salvation takes away all ground of glorying in the least, from the sinner; for it is by the faith of the gospel; Rom. iv. 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." The way how a sinner is to be brought into a state of salvation, is not by doing of a law, or any work of a law; but by believing or trusting to a report. Faith is a believing or trusting, which of all things is the farthest removed from the nature of a work; and it is an injury done to the free grace of God, to look upon it as a work, or to explain it so, as hardly to leave any believing or trusting in it.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Let the gospel gain trust with you, as ever ye would be saved from sin and wrath. And,

1*st*, Trust the gospel as true, as universally true, and that certainly and infallibly, as from God himself.

Motive 1. Consider the manner of its discovery, clearly appearing to be from God, being delivered by Jesus Christ and his apostles. It is a doctrine confirmed by the life and death of Christ, and particularly by his resurrection from the dead; by the miracles wrought by him and his apostles; John iii. 2.

Motive 2. Consider the manner of its propagation in the world. It overturned Judaism and Paganism, the only two religions in the world when it entered; and that neither by the subtlety of men and human learning, nor by the force of arms; but by the means of a few fishermen, declaring it in its simplicity; against whom the learning of the schools, and the power of the magistrate and sword, were engaged.

Motive 3. *Lastly*, Consider its effects on men, subduing their lusts, rendering them holy as God is holy; causing them to embrace it, over the belly of their worldly interest, and in spite of all hazards set before them by its enemies; and carrying them up comfortably in the midst of the most cruel death.

2*dly*, Trust to it, and lay the stress of your salvation on it as good. For which cause consider,

1. It discovers a righteousness in which a sinner may stand before a holy God; Rom. i. 17. The law requires righteousness, a perfect righteousness, under the pain of the curse, Gal. iii. 10, but it affords none, nor any strength whereby it may be wrought; but the gospel tells us of a righteousness already wrought, and offers it to the sinner; Rom. viii. 3, 4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." And in it there is what, in the eye of the law, will justify the sinner before God, and give perfect peace in one's own conscience; Rom. v. 1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. It sets before us the most glorious life of most perfect happiness, in the clearest and surest way; 2 Tim. i. 10. The brightest scheme of happiness and the most illuminated map of Immanuel's land, is therein laid before us; fit to draw men's hearts to it, over the belly of all opposition. The researches of happiness made by moralists were as midnight darkness; the discoveries of it in the Mosaic dispensation were but as the twilight; but in the gospel as the mid-day.

3. *Lastly*, It is the only channel of salvation, in which salvation

is conveyed to lost sinners; Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And,

1. It is the channel of salvation, to which whosoever do betake themselves by faith, shall undoubtedly be saved; Rom. i. 16, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." There they shall find quickening, sanctifying, and saving influences; as by a mean appointed of God for that very end.

2. There is no other channel of salvation, no not the law as contradistinguished thereto; 2 Cor. iii. It was the channel of life to innocent man once; but to a sinner never. When sin entered, it quite dried up as to all streams of life; Gal. ii. 16, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." In a sinking state of the church, the law and gospel are confounded, and the law jostles out the gospel, the dark shades of morality take place of gospel light; which plague is this day begun in this church, and well far advanced. Men think they see the fitness of legal preaching for sanctification; but how the preaching of the gospel should be such a mean, they cannot understand, through want of experience of the power of the gospel on their own souls. But,

(1.) The gospel, and not the law, has the word of divine appointment for that end; Eph. i. 13, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." It is the word of salvation, Acts xiii. 26; the word of grace, chap. xx. 32; and the word of life, Phil. ii. 16. But the law, as contradistinguished to it, is under no such appointment; but is the ministration of condemnation and death, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. Abana and Pharpar seemed as fit in the eyes of carnal men to cure a leper as Jordan; but Jordan had the word of divine appointment. And without such an appointment nothing can avail.

(2.) The gospel and not the law as contradistinguished thereto has the blessing annexed to it. There, and only there, is the power of God to salvation to be expected; Rom. i. 16. It alone is the ministration of the Spirit; 2 Cor. iii. 8. So the apostle could appeal to the experience of the Galatians; Gal. iii. 2, "This only," says he, "would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Now, that can never be the channel of salvation from which the Spirit is separated.

Wherefore know, that your life lies here, and that there is no salvation but in the way of trusting to the report of the gospel.

Doctrine III. Though many hear, yet few believe or trust to the report of the gospel.

In discoursing this Doctrine, I shall,

I. Confirm this point, That though many hear, yet few believe or trust to the report of the gospel.

II. Give the reasons why so few believe the report of the gospel.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall confirm this point, That though many hear, yet few believe or trust to the report of the gospel. It is clear, if ye consider and view these two things.

1*st*, A view of the church in all ages, and the entertainment the gospel has met with among them to whom it came.

2*dly*, A view of the church setting aside those whom the scripture determines to be unbelievers.

*First*, Let us take a view of the church in all ages, and the entertainment the gospel has met with among those to whom it came. It has been a despised and disbelieved gospel generally in all ages, and under all dispensations. Few believed it,

1. Under the patriarchal dispensation, from Adam to Moses. It was first preached in paradise to Adam and Eve, being comprehended in the promise of Christ to come. By them indeed it was believed, and Adam preached it; but Cain slew Abel, and headed an apostacy. And in the days of Enos, the son of Seth, there was a professed distinction made between professors and others; Gen. iv, 26, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." Noah, a preacher of righteousness, his doctrine was so little believed, that that generation was swept away with the flood. An unbelieving Ham was in the ark; and Nimrod shortly after headed a generation of unbelieving apostates, that built the tower of Babel. Abram was called alone from his country, where his father served other gods. And his posterity in Egypt had little knowledge of either law or gospel left them; Rom. v. 13, "For until the law sin was in the world."

2. Under the Mosaic dispensation, they had the gospel, though vailed with types and figures. But the body of the generation that came out of Egypt, believed not, but fell in the wildeaness; Heb. iv. 2. How often did the body of that nation fall off into idolatry? What heavy complaints did their prophets make time after time of the unbelief prevailing in their generations?

3. Under the Christian dispensation. The word out of Christ's own mouth was generally disbelieved; John xii. 37, 38, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, "Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The gospel never had so great

success as in the apostles' days; yet even but few believed it in comparison of others in the world; Rom. x. 16, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel." The state of the church for the times thereafter may be seen, Rev. vi. in the first six seals. Then in the time of Antichrist, the world wondered after the beast, the witnesses were reduced to two; and the churches of believers driven to the wilderness. At the reformation the gospel had remarkable success; but yet believers were but few comparatively; and there have been but few all along since that time.

*Secondly*, Let us take a view of the church, setting aside those whom the scripture determines to be unbelievers; and we will soon see that but few do remain. Set aside,

1. The grossly ignorant of Christ, and of the truths of the gospel. These God himself casts out of the number; Isa. xxvii. 11, "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour." There may be a believing in an unseen, but not an unknown Christ. How can they believe the gospel, that know not what it is?

2. The profane, who are Christians in name, because they live in a Christian country; but have not a shape of a Christianity about them. Surely these do not believe the gospel; Tit. i. 16, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Sanctification and belief of the truth go together, 2 Thess. ii. 13. The gospel is the great mean of God's appointment for reforming the world; if then it prevail not to the reforming of men's lives, it is an evidence they believe it not, Heb. iv. 2.

3. The carnal and worldly, who make the world their chief good, mainly seeking that, and favouring it only. These undoubtedly are unbelievers; Phil. iii. 19, 20, "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." No sooner doth a man believe the report of the gospel anent the unseen world, but the present evil world sinks in its value with him, Matth. xiii. 44, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." But to the most part the matters of faith are as the bird in the bush; what they see with their eyes is the bird in hand; Psalm iv. 6, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?"

4. Mere moralists, all whose religion is confined to some pieces of the second table. These are they who are just in their dealings with

men, but know nothing of dealing with God through Christ, and make no conscience of the duties of worshipping God. They come but the one half of that Pharisee's length, mentioned Luke xviii; and to be sure are unbelievers, for Christ sets them aside; Matth. v. 20, "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

5. Gross hypocrites, who have a profession of religion, and worship God, but in the meantime are loose and licentious in their walk. These are they who on their knees are like saints, but have no more religion than what lies in these external duties of worship. Them Christ sets aside as unbelievers; Matth. vii. 21, "Not every one that saith unto me, "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and will disown any saving relation to them; Luke vi. 46, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" That gospel that cleanses not a man's hands from unjust dealing; his mouth from lying, swearing, and filthy speaking; and his conversation from the pollutions of the world is certainly not believed.

6. Close hypocrites, whose outward conversation is blameless in the eye of the world, but in the meantime are inwardly strangers to God and Christ. Such were those in the church of Sardis, of whom our Lord says, Rev. iii. 1, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." They are not unacquainted with the practice of outward duties both towards God and man; but they are absolute strangers to the life of faith, communion with God, and experimental religion. They are walking on in the dark, and dreaming they are in the way; yet have never one foot on it. These are unbelievers, for faith purifies the heart; Acts xv. 9. They are self-justiciaries, like the Jews of old, "who being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God;" Rom. x. 3.

7. *Lastly*, All unregenerate persons; for they are certainly unbelievers, as believers are regenerate; as clear from John i. 12, 13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And such are all those who have never been convinced of their sin and misery; nor humbled, and brought to be content with a Saviour on any terms; who have never had Christ revealed in them; nor been savingly determined and enabled to embrace him.

Now they of these several sorts make the throng of the multitude of the hearers of the gospel. And it is but here and there one that is not of one or other of them. Set aside, then, all these, few remain, few believers, few who trust to the gospel-report.

II. I shall give the reasons why so few believe the report of the gospel.

1. There is a natural impotency in all; John vi. 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." This is cured in few; to few is the "arm of the Lord revealed." Believing the report of the gospel, is not, as some think, an easy report of imagination. It is beyond the power of nature. Yea, every thing in nature is against it, and riseth up against it, till the Spirit of the Lord overcome them into belief of the report of the gospel.

2. The predominant power of lusts, to which the gospel is an enemy. There our Lord lodges it; John iii. 19, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The gospel is a light; but they love darkness better; and therefore they will not receive the light by the belief thereof. They are set upon present things, things of sense; and therefore esteem the things of faith but as idle tales; John v. 44.

3. There is a judicial blindness on many. Men have refused to believe the gospel, that they might get continued in the embraces of their lusts, therefore God hath given them over into the hand of Satan, who has blinded them so, as they cannot behold the light and glory of the gospel; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

Use 1. Of information. Hence learn, that,

1*st*, There is great odds between hearing and doing; James i. 22. Many hear, but few obey; many are called, but few chosen. The gospel comes to the ears of many, who receive the sound with an air of reverence, but never receive it into their hearts by faith. Do not then lay stress on your attendance on ordinances, as if that would render you acceptableto God; Jer. vii. 4, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." Such a conceit will be sadly exposed at the last day, as is clear from what our Lord says will be the language of some at his awful tribunal, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." Unto all such he would say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;" Luke xiii. 26, 27.

2*dly*, This may remove the occasion of stumbling by these three things. Do not stumble at it, (1.) Because the gospel hath so few friends in an evil day. The scripture has told us before, that few believe it at any time. It is a greater wonder, that one adheres to

it over the belly of persecution, especially even to death, than that hundreds forsake it; considering how rare the faith of it is even in a time of peace. (2.) That the foundations of Christianity come at length to be attacked by men of corrupt minds. For what wonder is it, that, in a time of long peaceable enjoyment of the gospel, they that never truly believed it, come at length to question it, and in end downright to deny it? (3.) That the lives either of professors or ministers of the gospel are altogether unsuitable to it. For men may profess and preach the gospel too, that they never believed. Man's arm may fit men to possess and preach it; but it is the arm of the Lord only that can bring men to believe it.

Object. But is not that ground to question it, that so few believe it? Answ. That is no just prejudice against it. For, (1.) There are many natural truths, which yet are believed by very few. I suppose the thousandth, not to say the ten thousandth person in the world that sees the sun and moon, does not believe the sun to be bigger than a cart-wheel, or any star to be so big as the moon; and yet learned men demonstrate by reason, that the sun is bigger than the whole earth by far, and the moon less than any star. But the gospel is supernatural truth, which cannot be comprehended or received by mere reason; 1 Cor. ii. 14, "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore there is no ground to question the gospel-report, because few believe it. (2.) The most part of men are wedded to their lusts and passions, which the gospel is set for the rooting out of; Tit. ii. 11, 12, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It is the interest of their lusts that the gospel be not believed; and therefore the general unbelief of the gospel is no prejudice against it; because men generally have a strong bias against it, from the mighty power of their lusts; John iii. 19, forecited. But the belief of it is of equal latitude with a sincere desire of enjoying God, and being like him; which is man's chief happiness.

3*dly*, The common way of the world is not God's way; and they are rare persons that are right. This is evident from our Lord's exhortation, Matth. vii. 13, 14, "Enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Many will be walled out of the visible church, and thrown away as

naught, till they be left but as one of a city, and two of a family, as the gleanings of the vintage, that are to be carried to Zion above.

They are men wondered at, Zech. iii. 8; therefore not ordinary; God's jewels; Mal. iii. 17; therefore not common stuff; Christ's little, little flock, Luke xii. 32, (Greek.)

4*thly*, *Lastly*, Surely many deceive themselves as to their faith of the gospel, thinking they believe the gospel while they really believe it not; Hos. viii. 2, 3, "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good." The apostle observes; 2 Thess. iii. 2, that "all men have not faith;" and our Lord shows it to be very rare; Luke xviii. 8, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" I suppose it will be found, that few believe this very truth we are insisting on. For as few as there are who believe the gospel, if the question were put to each of us, Do you believe the gospel? Do you believe it? I reckon few, if any, particularly of the unbelievers, but would say, They do. The reasons of the mistake are these:—

1. They were brought up in the profession of the gospel, and they never questioned their belief of it. Many among us have no more for their belief of the gospel, than Papists in Italy have for their belief of Popery, and Pagans in America for their belief of Paganism. Their fathers, and mothers, and priests told them so; and so they have a human faith of Popery and Paganism, upon that human testimony. And so many a Scotsman has no more but a human faith of the gospel, which they have taken up on the word of their fathers, mothers, and ministers; and they never questioned it. But the divine faith of the gospel is another thing, and that they will find when they come to a pinch in that matter; Matth. xvi. 17, "And Jesus said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." 1 Thess. ii. 13, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

2. They never had much ado with their faith of the gospel. Such as it is, it has lien by them idle all their days; like a book by a scholar he never had occasion to consult; or a piece of money one never offered in payment to his neighbour. Their faith of the gospel was never tried with barefaced Satanical temptations, obstinately insisted in; nor with their afflictions; nor with sound and thorough convictions of their lost and miserable state; and all is good untried. But the trial would have discovered another thing, James i. 12, that is true faith of the gospel that will abide a trial, 1 Pet. i. 6. 7.

3. They satisfy themselves with a general historical faith of the gospel, knowing nothing of trusting to it for all Christ's salvation to themselves. And if that be the believing of the gospel report, the devils are as good believers as they, and better too; James ii. 19, for the devils believe and tremble. They know not what it is to be, at the instance of the law, set before the tribunal of God, in the court of conscience, and to have the law there pressing them particularly with its demands and curse; and for their own defence to be fain to plead there as for their life, the holiness of Christ's nature, the righteousness of his life, and satisfaction for sin, and that upon the credit of the gospel report.

But there are four things which may evince that most of the hearers of the gospel, whatever they think, do not believe the gospel, nor trust it as true, nor trust to it as good.

1. It does not purify their hearts and lives; Acts xv. 9. The belief of the truth is the means appointed of God for sanctification; 2 Thess. ii. 13, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Eph. v. 25, 26, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word." And it is the word of the gospel that is so; John xv. 3, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The word of the gospel received into the heart by faith, is like a spring that works out the mud; 1 Thess. ii. 13, "The word of God effectually worketh in you that believe." It is like leaven that seeks through the whole mass. For the Spirit of sanctification is in it; John vi. 63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth." The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." So then whose heart and life soever is not purified by the gospel, they do not really believe it; Heb. iv. 2.

The profane man, he that is ungodly with respect to God, unrighteous with respect to men, not sober with respect to himself, does not believe the gospel; for it "teacheth us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12; and is effectual in believers; 1 Thess. ii. 13, forecited. But such a one is master of it, it is not master of him. Rom. i. 18, "He holds the truth in unrighteousness." The man that is a slave to his passions, his pride, wrath, and revenge, believes not the gospel; Isaiah xi. 6. The man whose God is the world, the covetous, the unjust, the sensual, the vain, &c., believes not; Matth. xiii. 45, 46, forecited.

2. It does not make them fruitful to God, as it does in believers; Col. i. 5, 6. That faith is vain that is without works; James ii. 20.

The word of the gospel is a heavenly seed, which, received into the hearts by faith, never misseth to bring forth fruit. As it puts out the fruits of the flesh, it brings in the fruits of the Spirit. It makes the man to live to Christ, and live for him; Phil. i. 21; as the woman of Samaria did, who not only lived unto Christ herself, but induced others, by her example, to believe in him as their Saviour. See John, chap. iv.

The man that makes no conscience of serving his generation by doing good to others, that lays not out himself to be useful for God in his place and station, that thinks it enough that he does not ill to others, and hangs not out a flag of defiance against the honour of God, is as really an unbeliever of the gospel, as he that is noxious, in respect of God and man; for where is his fruit? Col. i. 6. See Matth. xii. 30, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad."

3. It is not their chief comfort, as it is to the saints; Psalm cxix. 49, 50, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." The scripture calls the believer's great hope, "the hope of the gospel;" Col. i. 23. And it has been proven to be so by their suffering for it even unto death; Mark viii. 35, "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it." What bears up a man in his greatest straits, must needs be his greatest comfort. The gospel is that which bore up the hearts of believers, under their greatest hardships. Therefore it has been found, that brown bread and the gospel has been pleasant fare to many a believer. Take away the gospel, and take the sun out of the world. Whatever are their straits or their storms, the gospel is their plight-anchor.

But alas! there are few thus minded. Give them full pantries and a warm fire-side, they could be right cheery without the gospel. It is the corn and the cattle, good markets, &c., they know the comfort of these; but many that know that, know little of the comfort of the gospel. If they be lifted up at any time, it is not the gospel that does it, but some creature-comfort. If some affliction befal them, some creature-comfort removed; what helps them is not the comfort of the gospel, but some other creature-comfort put in its room, or hoped for.

If one had his stock in a ship at sea, whatever joys or sorrows that man met with in his means at home, they would not be his chief ones; the chief would be about the ship. The gospel is the ship the believer's stock is in; and whatever joys or sorrows he

meets with in the world, yet his chief ones are in the gospel; Hab. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." There is such a difference betwixt a believer and an unbeliever, as betwixt a laird and a tenant in a harvest flood sweeping away the corn. The corn being swept away, the tenant has nothing left. Micah said, when his gods were taken away, "What have I more?" The other comforts himself, Yet it has not swept away the land. So Job vi. 13, "Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?"

4. It is not their chief concern what come of it. Ofttimes they have no concern at all about it; they will profanely put that off to them that live by it. Be it so, then all that believe it live by it, and it will be their chief concern; Isaiah xxxviii. 16; John vi. 63. It is the word of life, and believing it is the way to live; Isaiah lv. 3, "Hear, and your soul shall live." They will be concerned for it as for their life; Deut. xxxii. 47, and take away their hope from that airth, they would reckon themselves most miserable; 1 Cor. xv. 19. Therefore they will strive for the faith of the gospel as their all.

But I fear many a hearer of the gospel would take it for no ill news, if any body could but make them sure of it, that the whole gospel is but a fable; a plain evidence that it is not the thing they mainly trust to, else they would be mainly concerned for it.

Use 2. Be stirred up then to a weighty concern to attain to the true faith of the report of the gospel; that ye may be of those who really trust it as true, and trust to it as good. These following things may be of use to put a peculiar edge on your spirits for this:—

1. That there are so few that really believe it in a saving manner. When Christ said, "One of you shall betray me," the disciples said, "Is it I?" And the consideration that so few believe the report of the gospel, should put every one to see himself, that he be not an unbeliever.

2. Your salvation or damnation turns on this point; Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Many will be affected with some gross sins of theirs against the law, who never see the venom of their unbelief of the gospel. But this is the sin that draws deepest; and therefore that is the sin which the Spirit is in a special manner to convince of; John xvi. 8, 9, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin because they be-

lieve not on me." And that is the great soul-ruining sin; John iii. 19, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."

3. Doing this ye do all; Mark v. 36, "Be not afraid, only believe." This is the short way, and the only way to sanctification. It is the belief of the gospel that brings sinners to the obedience of the law; for thereby the soul is united to Christ, the storehouse of grace, and of the Spirit of holiness; Eph. iii. 17; John i. 16. Hence it purifies the heart; Acts. xv. 9; and the heart being purified, the life will be so too. So the apostle runs up obedience to it; 1 Tim. i. 5.

4. If ye do not this ye do nothing; 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." John vi. 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." All that ye do in the way of obedience without it, will be but as so many cyphers, that will amount to just nothing in the sight of a holy God; Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Your prayers, tears, justice, sobriety, &c., all will be lost without faith. Whatever good works any does without faith, are but dead works; they may have the shape of good works, but the soul and life is wanting. Here is the reason why endeavours of reformation with unbelievers do not succeed; why, when the doctrine of the gospel is corrupted, and preachers, instead of preaching Christ, turn their sermons into harangues of moral virtue, they and their hearers lose both grace and virtue, and turn profane.

5. *Lastly*, If ye really believe the gospel, nothing can ruin you; if ye do not, nothing can save you. Under the law, the Jews were a stubborn, disobedient generation, every now and then falling into idolatry, till the Babylonish captivity; yet were they preserved, God minding to try them with the dispensation of the gospel. But when they rejected and disbelieved the gospel, though they had quite left their idolatry, they were destroyed.

So whatever is your guilt, if ye believe the gospel, it will be wiped out; Acts xvi. 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" if not, whatever good ye do, ye will perish; John iii. 36, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." The gospel is the last method of Heaven for the salvation of sinners; where the law failed, the gospel came to help out; Rom. viii. 3. But if ye miss salvation in the way of the gospel, there is not another method to follow; so it is the last ship bound for Immanuel's land, and therefore the only one.

I shall conclude with some directions how to believe the gospel.

1. Persuade yourselves, that the faith of the gospel is beyond the power of nature; John vi. 44; that there is a necessity of a power from on high to bring you to believe. This will raze the old foundation, and cause you look up for it.

2. Urge on yourselves the faith of the law. It also is the testimony of God. Believe it with application to yourselves. See the authority of God in its commands binding on you; the truth of God, in its threatening and curse, reaching you and holding you fast.

3. *Lastly*, With an eye to the Spirit's working in you, consider and apply the promise of the gospel; for that is not only the object, but the means of faith; Rom. x. 17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Doctrine IV. There is no true believing or trusting to the report of the gospel, but what is the effect of the working of a divine power on the soul for that end.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,

I. Evince the truth of it.

II. Shew what is that working of divine power whereby the soul is brought to trust to the gospel-report.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall evince the truth of the doctrine. Consider for it,

1. Express scripture testimony; John vi. 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." The apostle calls it therefore "The faith of the operation of God," Col. ii. 12; and "the work of faith with power," 2 Thess. i. 11, is fulfilled. Hence believing is said to be given; Phil. i. 29. Yea, no less power is put forth in it, than that which was exerted in the raising of Christ from the dead; Eph. i. 19, 20.

2. The state that by nature we are in, "dead in sin;" Eph. ii. 1. Faith is the first vital act of the soul, quickened by the Spirit of life from Jesus Christ; which therefore a soul without the Spirit of life, is no more capable of, than a dead man of breathing, walking, &c. The raising of the dead is a work competent to God alone; the raising of dead souls as well as bodies; John v. 25, 26, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

3. There can be no faith without knowledge; and the knowledge of spiritual things man is by nature incapable of; 1 Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, be-

cause they are spiritually discerned." How can one trust to the report of the gospel, without discerning the gospel in its glorious excellency? But the eye of man naturally is out as to these things. Natural truths he can discern by natural powers; but supernatural truths are above his reach without supernatural abilities.

4. Man is naturally under the power of Satan, a captive of the devil, who with his utmost efforts will hinder the work of faith; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Such a case the gospel finds men in; Isa. lxi. 1; and it is the design of the gospel to bring them out of it; Acts xxvi. 17, 18. But how can such be the design of the gospel, but because it is the instrument of a superior power; Rom. i. 16, and is rendered effectual by the Omnipotent himself? 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The strong man must be cast out by a stronger.

5. Man's trust is by nature firmly pre-occupied by those things which the gospel calls them to renounce. He is wedded to other confidences naturally, which therefore he will hold by, till a power above nature carry him off from them. And therefore it is a differencing character between the Lord's people and all others, that they have "no confidence in the flesh;" Phil. iii. 3.

(1.) Self-confidence is natural to man. And therefore it is the first lesson at Christ's school, to deny ourselves; which is inwarped in the very nature of faith, or trusting to the gospel; Matth. xvi. 24. Man going away from God as his chief end, set up himself for his chief end; and so it is as natural for him to act from and for himself, as for birds to fly in the air. So that to unself a man, which is done in the work of faith, must needs be a work of divine power.

(2.) Creature-confidence. Man not being self-sufficient, must needs seek something without himself wherein to rest his heart. Being estranged from God, he goes to the creature; Jer. ii. 13. And to it he is so wedded in confidence, that, after a thousand disappointments, he still maintains it. And the truth is, it is impossible to get the heart carried off it, except to absolute despair, without putting a better in the room thereof; which is done only by faith taking a God in Christ instead thereof; Matth. xiii. 45, 46. This surely requires a supernatural power; Jer. xvi. 19.

(3.) Law-confidence. The law was Adam's covenant; and as he was to work and win his wages, so that is the natural religion of all his posterity. Nature knows no other way of acceptance with God; and men stick by it till death, and a violent death too, do part them; Gal. ii. 19, "For I through the law am dead to the law,

that I might live unto God." Rom. vii. 4, "Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." An evidence that it is another power than their own must bring them off it.

6. Man has a strong bias and bent against believing or trusting to the gospel; Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." John v. 40, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The contrivance of the gospel lies cross to the mind and will of natural men, and they to it; so that the one is the very reverse of the other. Hence the Jews and Greeks both were opposite to the gospel, and in their wisdom reckoned it folly. So that the soul must be new moulded by a divine power, ere it can receive it; 1 Cor. ii. 14, forecited.

7. *Lastly*, It is the product of the Holy Spirit, wherever it is; Gal. v. 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is faith." Hence Christ is called "the author of it," Heb. xii. 2, as working it in the elect by his own Spirit; 2 Cor. iv. 13. It was promised in the covenant for the elect, to be effected by the Spirit; and so it is peculiar to them; Acts xiii. 48, as being the work of God's Spirit only. And the gospel is the only immediate outward mean of it, because it only is "the ministration of the Spirit."

II. What is that working of divine power whereby the soul is brought to trust to the gospel-report? There is a twofold work of divine power on the soul for that end.

*First*, A mediate work, which is preparatory to it; whereof the Spirit is the author, and the instrument is the law. It is twofold.

1*st*, An awakening work; whereby the secure sinner is roused up, and made to lay salvation to heart, which he was little concerned about before, sleeping securely. And that is done by the Spirit's bringing home the law on the sinner's conscience. And,

1. There is a divine power bringing home on the sinner's conscience the commands of the law; Rom. vii. 9, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And thereby they are discovered; 1. In their divine authority, as the commands of the eternal sovereign God, which clothes them with an awfulness they were not wont to appear in to the sinner; each of them being prefaced with a "Thus saith the Lord." 2. As binding on the sinner in particular; so that the bond of the command is found by him girding him strait, however he felt little of it before; Rom. vii. 10, "And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." It is observable that the

ten commands are all in the second person, speaking to every man as if they concerned no other but him, "Thou shalt not," &c. And when the Spirit comes, he speaks them the same way to the sinner's conscience; Rom. vii. 7, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Now hereby the sinner is convinced of sin, and brought in guilty before the Lord, John xvi. 8; Rom. iii. 19. His sins original and actual, of heart and life, of thoughts, words, and actions, are set before him, Psalm l. 21. And he is like a thief found, Jer. ii. 26.

2. This divine power brings home on the sinner's conscience the curse of the law; John xvi. 8, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." And it is discovered to be, 1. God's curse, heavier than mountains of lead, which, in virtue of his greatness, is insupportable, in virtue of his infiniteness eternal, and in virtue of his truth infallible; though before it was but like the sounding again of the mountains in his conceit. 2. God's curse on him in particular, staking him down to revenging wrath. The Spirit of the Lord says within the man, as Mal. iii. 9, "Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." As long as the sinner can ward off the particular application of the curse to himself, he will little value the gospel, Rev. iii. 17. But the word delivers it in the general; Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" and a divine power obliges the conscience to apply.

Hereby the sinner is convinced of his misery, and sees himself lost and undone, Luke xv. 17. And so he is,

1. Stung to the heart, and galled with remorse, Acts ii. 37. Waves of killing grief go over his soul; he sees he has been murdering his own soul, and he groans out an elegy over his dead self; Rom. vii. 9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

2. Frightened with terror, Acts xvi. 29; with the terror of God, the terror of death, and the terror of eternity.

3. Racked with anxiety, Acts ii. 37. Sometimes he hopes, sometimes he fears, but is always anxious. This anxiety fills head, heart, and hands; swallows up all other cares, for the man sees how true it is; Matth. xvi. 26, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

2*dly*, An humbling work, whereby the proud sinner is brought low to the dust; not only finding a need of salvation, but an abso-

lute need of Christ for salvation ; that there is no other way of help for him; but if he get not Christ he must perish. So he is broken off from,

1. Self-confidence, Luke xv. 17. He sees he has destroyed himself, but cannot help himself, Hos. xiii. 9. He finds that he is without strength, light, or life; that his work is quite beyond his reach, the debt beyond his ability to pay; the bonds of sin, in the guilt of it, and the power of it, quite above his might to break asunder, Rom. vii. 9.

2. Creature-confidence, Luke xv. 16. While his conscience was asleep, he pleased himself in his enjoyment of the creature, but now that it is awake, the emptiness of the whole creation is felt by him. His lawful comforts are foysonless, while he thinks God is his enemy; his unlawful comforts have left a sting behind them, which the whole creation cannot pull out. There is no rest for his heart now, but in a God in Christ.

3. Law-confidence, Rom. vii. 9, 10. Time was when he had hopes of acceptance with God by the deeds of the law, and set down his duties of first and second table as so much clear gain; but now he sees they are all but loss, Phil. iii. 6, 7. So he despairs of mending his case that way; and that he cannot pay his own debt in whole or in part. And all this is by means of the law too, discovered in its spirituality and severity; Gal. ii. 19, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God."

*Secondly*, This work of divine power is an immediate work; whereby faith is produced in the soul, it caused to trust to the gospel-report; whereof the Spirit is the author, and the gospel the instrument. And it is,

1. A quickening work; whereby the dead soul is called again to spiritual life; Eph. ii. 1, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Therefore the same power is said to be exerted in that case, as in raising Christ from the dead, re-uniting his soul with his body, Eph. i. 19, 20. So the Spirit of Christ enters into the dead soul, and the dry bones live, Ezek. xxxvi. 27; which Spirit is communicated in the word of the gospel, as the vehicle thereof, so to speak, Gal. iii. 2. Hence the word of the gospel is said to be spirit and life, John vi. 63; as being the ministration of the Spirit. An emblem of which is in the resurrection of the dry bones. And hence there is,

1. A power to believe, as in a living man to breathe. So the Spirit of life being the Spirit of faith in the soul, it has a supernatural power, for that supernatural act, 2 Cor. iv. 13. In vain do we call the lame man to walk, who has no ability of walking; but the Spi-

rit with the call of the gospel entering into the sinner, he is enabled to embrace Christ on the gospel-report.

2. A disposition to believe; Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" as in Lazarus brought to life, to come out of the grave, and to lie no longer there. So the soul becomes pliable to the gospel-call, content to come to Christ, content to be made clean. Death's bands being loosed, the neck is no more as an iron sinew; but the life given disposes to what is agreeable to it.

2. An illuminating work. There is a knowledge in faith, which is therefore called knowledge, Isa. liii. 11; John xvii. 3. No man will trust to the report of the gospel until he know it, and know it by a supernatural discovery too, 1 Cor. ii. 14. And the Spirit of the Lord makes that discovery, Acts xxvi. 18; shewing the treasure hid in the gospel-field, Matth. xiii. 44. This the Spirit doth by bringing home the gospel-report to the soul; in which he demonstrates it to the soul with the greatest certainty, 1 Cor. ii. 4. He demonstrates it to be,

1. God's own word, 1 Thess. ii. 13. The report comes in the word that Christ is sent in the character of Saviour of the world; that he is able to save, and willing to save the worst of sinners; and that "whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. The Spirit of the Lord sets this in such a clear light, as that the sinner sees it is not a report of fallible men; but the word of the eternal God that cannot lie; the divine testimony, which is so certain that it cannot be false, 1 Cor. ii. 4.

(2.) God's word to that soul in particular, as really as if a voice from heaven did speak to him by name, saying, Such an one, Christ is your Saviour, able and willing to save you; and you trusting on him "shall not perish, but have everlasting life," 1 Thess. i. 5. This is as it were an internal word, applying to the soul in particular, the external word which is general; and without it the special application of faith will not be. Hence the Spirit is said to convince of righteousness as well as of sin; which he does by a particular application of the law in the one, and of the gospel in the other; John xvi. 8. And the Spirit's testimony of Christ is distinguished from the preacher's testimony; John xv. 26, 27, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

(3.) A determining work, effectually and irresistibly determining them to believe, so that they can no longer not believe. This is

called the Father's drawing, viz., by his Spirit; John vi. 44. The Spirit of the Lord freely wins the soul, over the belly of all opposition.

(1.) To believe, and trust the report of the gospel, as true. For the demonstration of the Spirit is accompanied with power; 1 Cor. ii. 4. Some things are so clear to all, as that two and three make five, so that none can but believe it. Some things are so demonstrated by sight, or by reason, that though one could not believe them before, they can as little not believe them, or withhold their assent from them, after. So the gospel being demonstrated by the Spirit, cannot but be believed, and trusted as true; and therefore it is said to have come in much assurance; 1 Thess. i. 5, as a thing seen by the soul, or demonstrated to it.

And so faith is the soul's echo to this demonstration of the Spirit; the soul saying he is the Saviour of the world, and my Saviour, able and willing to save sinners, and to save me; on whom I trusting shall not perish, like Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," John xx. 28.

(2.) To trust to the report of the gospel, as good. For the same demonstration of the Spirit so discovers the excellency, and absolute suitableness of Christ to the sinner's case, and full security for its salvation that is in him, upon the infallible truth of the gospel-report that it being earnestly desirous of salvation, cannot but trust to it as good for them, and good security.

So then here faith takes up the soul's eternal rest, resting wholly on Christ held forth in the gospel for salvation, upon the security of the word of the gospel.

Use I. Of information. Hence learn, that,

1. The faith of the gospel is to be suspected, that springs up without a work of mighty power to the producing of it. These are not of that sort; Eph. i. 19, 20, who have experienced "the exceeding greatness of his power toward them in believing, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Wild oats spring up without any pains about them; but it is not so with good grain. So a false faith may spring from nature, without divine influence; but true faith is the fruit of the mighty power of God. It is the loss of many, that they come easily by their religion, they know not how, but as in a morning-dream, it costs them nothing.

It is true, grace is a seed that springs and grows up a man knows not how; Mark iv. 17. But it is one thing to spring up without tilling and sowing; another, to spring up out of ground tilled and sown, one knows not how. The husbandman knows very well how he comes

by his crop, what pains he was at in labouring the ground, though he cannot account for that how the seed he sowed did turn into such a fair braird. So faith springing up in the heart may be mysterious to the believer, as to the time and way of it; who yet knows there was an awakening, humbling, enlightening, and powerfully determining work on him for that end.

Some indeed may be sanctified from the womb; but that will appear in grace's exercise beginning with the exercise of reason; and Satan will readily assault their faith after, that they shall find a difficulty in the exercise of it.

2. See whence it is that most men's faith of the gospel has no sanctifying effect on their lives. It is a mere natural faith, and therefore cannot change their natures. If their faith were the produce of a mighty work of divine power on their souls, whereby they were quickened, humbled, enlightened, and powerfully determined, it would make a suitable change on the whole man. It would be a most holy faith; Jude verse 20, as making holy; produced by the holy Spirit; and uniting the soul to the holy Jesus, and drawing sanctifying virtue from him.

3. The salvation of sinners is altogether of free grace. Man can do nothing to purpose for himself any manner of way. In the law-way, perfect obedience is required; that is certainly beyond his reach. In the gospel-way faith is required; and that is beyond his power too; Eph. ii. 8, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." The gospel casts out a rope to hale sinners to land; but the sinner has no hands to lay hold on it; his very faith must be wrought in him by the Spirit.

4. Believers have reason to be humble, and to acknowledge that whatever difference in the matter of faith and holiness is betwixt them and others, it is purely owing to the work of the Spirit, not to themselves, agreeable to what the apostle saith; 1 Cor. iv. 7, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Sinners are all naturally dead in sin; and free grace sends the quickening Spirit to one, not to another; that "he that glories, may glory in the Lord."

5. The difficulty that some find in believing, is rather a good sign, than an ill one. They were the disciples that said; Luke xvii. 5, "Increase our faith." The soul that finds a difficulty in believing the gospel, and is loaded with that slowness to believe, and looking out to the Spirit of the Lord to help him to believe, is in a hopeful case as to the work of faith; Mark ix. 24. The Lord makes the truth of faith, and his own power in working it, to appear the

better, by letting men feel the power of their unbelieving hearts.

Use 2. Of Exhortation. Let us look to the Lord for the operation of his mighty power, to cause us to believe. There is need of this, (1.) For the begetting of true faith in us. Natural powers assisted with the best means of external revelation, will not do it. (2.) For the increasing and exercise of faith. New supplies are necessary for this. And with respect to both, both ministers and people have need to look to the Spirit of God. As the ship will make but sorry progress, if the wind blow not; so the gospel will be but ill improven, if the Spirit of the Lord do not blow.

Doctrine. The feeling of this power of God is ofttimes very rare among the hearers of the gospel.

We need not insist on the proof of this; our own case is a visible evidence of it. With respect to which we may consider, 1. What are the causes of it; and, 2. Our duty.

I. What are the causes of it? Why is it so with us?

1. An old standing quarrel that God has with our mother. The sins of Manasseh were a standing quarrel in the days of his grandson Josiah; 2 Kings xxiii. 26, and his great-grandson Jehoiakim, chap. xxiv. 3. God is saying concerning us, as Hos. ii. 4, 5, "And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot; she that conceived them hath done shamefully; for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water," &c. Do we ask, Why the Lord has so much withdrawn himself in our land? Ah! what wonder is it, his soul so much abhores a land, wherein a covenant sworn to him with uplifted hands, was broken purposely, burnt disgracefully, his ordinances changed, his saints persecuted and murdered, and his name insulted and blasphemed; and these things never yet sufficiently mourned for; I doubt much if ever Scotland shall recover her ancient spiritual glory, through the presence of the Lord remarkably and gloriously with her, till she go back to God in the manner she came away.

2. A present course of backsliding among all ranks in church and state. In reforming times the Spirit of the Lord returns to a land; Psalm cii. 16, 17, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." And so it was seen among our forefathers oftener than once. Our present case in respect of the Lord's withdrawing, doth therefore write us a backsliding generation; whose judgment and sin, see Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." The generation

is souring apace; the elder sort losing the life of religion that sometime-a-day they had; and the younger neither knowing any thing about it, nor caring for it. A sad evidence of the Spirit's being in great measure gone.

3. Worldliness prevailing through long peace. Times of persecution were times of much of God's presence; enemies kept professors stirring. And the more they afflicted them, the more they grew; the young folk were engaged to embrace a persecuted religion. But now the generation is sunk in worldly cares and ease; and religion is so cheap, that it is quite undervalued. It is as Josh. xxiv. 31, "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel;" implying, that after the elders were gone too, the generation went away from God, for good and all. Truly, we may say in our case, Our Joshuas are away long ago; and our elders that have outlived them, are by this time nearly gone. So the Lord, and his great works he did in the land, are almost worn out of ken, and out of mind, with this generation; and the generation that knew not Joseph and his afflictions, are filling the stage fast, and proclaiming themselves unconcerned in them; trampling on that religion that others suffered for. But let them take heed that sadder sufferings be not abiding them, that they will neither get shifted, nor be so well buckled for. See Judges iii. 1, "Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan."

4. Grieving and quenching the Spirit; Isa. lxiii. 10. The Spirit is compared to a fire; and when that holy fire is cherished and nourished, a small spark may become a great flame; but being neglected, and sought to be extinguished, it abates. Many have been the methods taken publicly and privately to quench the Spirit in the generation; and they have prevailed far, till that which remains is even ready to die. God who by his own hand has given several sharp knocks at the door of some sinners' hearts, who yet would not open, has therefore been provoked to go and leave them.

II. What is our duty in such a case?

1. Mourn over it; lament the Lord's withdrawings as those who are sensible of the great loss; 1 Sam. vii. 2.

2. Pray much and earnestly for the return of his powerful presence to ordinances; Cant. iii. 1—4; Isa. lxiv. 7.

3. *Lastly*, Consider the word of the gospel as the word of the eternal God; 1 Thess. ii. 13, and labour to walk up to what ye know of the word; John vii. 17. If ye do so, ye shall feel, that his "words do good to him that walketh uprightly;" Micah ii. 7.

## THE WAY TO LIFE, AND THE WAY TO DESTRUCTION UNFOLDED*

MATTH. vii. 13, 14,

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

MEN in this life are but on their way, not in their home-house, where they are to abide; and it nearly concerns all, since life on the one hand, and destruction on the other, are before them, having their different gates and ways leading to them, to take heed which gate, which way they choose, to enter and go by. "Enter ye in at the strait gate," &c.

The scope of these words is, to remove a great stumbling-block against serious religion, that lies in the way of the world; that is, the great difficulty there is in such a course of life, and the very small number of those that follow it. This makes terrible havoc in the world, and time after time men fall over this stumbling-block. Our Saviour had been preaching his sermon on the mount, wherein he gives such a view of true and real religion, as could not miss to be very unacceptable to carnal men. They were ready thereupon to say, These were hard sayings, few will ever fall in with them; the vote of the plurality of men is against that way, and points to a far easier course; and can we imagine but there is safety in the trodden path, and shall we forsake it for an overgrown one? To remove this, our Saviour peremptorily determines the wide and beaten road, wherein the throng of the world goes, to be the way to destruction; and that the way to life is a very narrow one, hard to find, and hard to walk in; and therefore, from the necessity there is of obtaining eternal life, and escaping eternal destruction, at any rate, cost what it will, exhorts us to enter in at the strait gate.

In the words we have two things.

I. An exhortation and warning how to direct our course for the other world, which this world and life is but the avenue to; "Enter ye in at the strait gate," &c. And here we have,

1. The course pointed out to us which is the safe one, "the strait gate." A gate is properly the port of a city, as Acts xii. 10, or of a court, as Acts iii. 10, but I do not find it used for the door of a house. So here it is plain there is a metaphor; and some think the

* Several sermons preached at Ettrick, in the year 1731.

metaphor is double, namely, (1.) That heaven is here compared to a house, into which a strait gate leadeth; (2.) To a city, to which is a narrow way. But if heaven is here compared to a city, hell is so too; for there is a wide gate, and a broad way leading to destruction, as well as a strait gate and a narrow way leading unto life. But I think it is not the scripture way to speak of hell under the notion of a city. I judge, then, the metaphor is one: that heaven is here compared to a house; as Luke xiii. 25, "When once the master of the house is risen up," &c.; as hell also is, being held out under the notion of a prison, pit, dungeon, &c.; but such a house as has a court before it where is the gate which they must enter by that would enter into the house. So it is plain, that the "gate," the "way," and "the entering in at the gate," is in this world, and in this life, Gen. xxviii. 17. And so it is in the case of hell. Wherefore the godly, true converts, are, as it were, in the outer court of heaven; the ungodly and unregenerate in the outer court of hell; both making forward to their place.

2. A course hinted at which is unsafe. For speaking of the strait gate, he supposes there is also a wide gate, the which also he directly teaches after. So there are two gates before us, very different in themselves, and leading to very different ends.

3. Our duty and interest with respect to these gates. It is to enter in at the strait one. Here the Lord directs our choice as to these gates. As soon as we begin to discern betwixt good and evil, we begin, as it were, to enter at one of these gates; and we will be sure to choose the wide one as easiest, till we hear the voice of Christ, and be persuaded to change our course. Satan invites to the wide one, the world throngs in at it, it is most agreeable to the flesh; but our Saviour bids us choose the strait one, warns us to beware of the wide one. This is a shocking call and warning to nature, hard to digest. Who would choose to thrust in by a strait gate, where there were a broad one in which one might have full scope? Therefore we have

II. A reason for this exhortation and warning, consisting of two parts.

*First*, That though the other gate is easy, and much frequented, yet it is most dangerous; and they are fools that prefer the road unto destruction, to the road unto life, because the former is easier than the latter; for what wisdom can there be in fondly embracing that present ease, which must end in eternal agony? Here, then, our Saviour points out the opposite gate, the gate opposite to the strait one, that we may avoid it; and he points it out, together with the way conformed thereto. The gate and the way, I think, are

not to be conceived as separate things, as a way leading to a city, and a gate leading into a house, but as an undivided space; however, the gate and the way may be distinguished; they are to be conceived as making one undivided space, for our Saviour speaks of them as one, "that go in thereat," or "by it," not "by them."

Some take the way in this metaphor for the space between the two sides of the gate, at which rate the gate contains the way. But this makes the gate the immediate entrance into the house, which I do not find that word used for; for certainly the way lands one in the house, according to the text. Besides, the mention of the way of the same nature with the gate, would at this rate be superfluous; for wherever there is a wide gate, there must be such a broad space; and where a strait gate, there must be such a narrow space; for it is the broadness or narrowness of the space left betwixt the sides of the gate, that makes the gate broad or strait. Wherefore I judge the gate and the way are to be conceived as a continuous space, the one terminating in the other.

Some conceive the way to lead to the gate, and so to be first in order. But this still makes the gate the gate of the house, or the door of it, which, we have found, cannot be admitted; and our Saviour himself distinguishes these two, Luke xiii. 24, 25.

Wherefore I conceive, that, according to the order of the text, the gate is before the way; so that entering in by it, we enter into the way, as one going in at the gate of an outer court, and passing through it, passes on the way into the house. And thus ye have the metaphor stated, which is necessary for understanding the mind of the spirit in the text, as to the spiritual doctrine taught thereby. Now here we have,

1*st*, The nature of the gate opposite to that we are called to enter in by, and of the way joining it.

1. The gate is a wide one. The entrance into the way to hell is very easy. It is a room port and spacious, whereat multitudes may throng in, without troubling one another. None will need to thrust through here, it will admit them with all ease; for it is perfectly agreeable to the flesh, to the natural inclinations. It is so wide, that people may close their eyes, run at random, and not miss it; even young ones may get in at it without difficulty.

2. The way that joins it is broad. When they are through the gate, they are on a way that is a broad one, where they will get full scope and elbow-room. They will not find themselves pent up there, as in a narrow road. There they are not hampered in their natural inclinations, by conscience, Bible, &c., but get full scope for the vanity of their minds, the aversion of their wills to good, and proneness to evil, and all their disorderly affections.

2*dly*, The use made of it. It is much frequented; "many there be which go in thereat." The wideness of the gate, and breadth of the way, affording so much ease to passengers, invite people to it: and it takes so, that the throng of the world goes that way. There are many different dispositions of carnal men, these contrary one to another; there are covetous and prodigals, profane and formalists, &c., but however opposite they are one to another, they meet there; and the gate and the way are so wide, that there are roads therein for each of them.

3*dly*, The end of it, and tendency. The end of it is destruction, and to that it tends, (Gr.) leads away. However easy the gate and way are, every step taken therein is a step to eternal ruin. So, however inviting the beginning and progress in it be, the end of it is frightful. There is a pit at the end of the broad way, which may scare men from entering on it.

The second part of the reason is, That though the gate we are called to enter in by is indeed difficult, yet it is safe, and a happy one.

1*st*, The nature of the gate and way joining it.

1. The gate is strait. The entry into the way of religion is difficult; it will require a great deal of resoluteness to get in by it. Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." One must thrust through it, cast off their burdens; they will not get in with them on their backs, they must bring themselves into a narrow compass, leaving all superfluity of naughtiness at the entry. The Jewish doctors speak of the gate of repentance, the gate of prayer, and the gate of tears. These and the like are indeed the gate we are to enter by; and they are strait.

2. The way joining it is narrow, (Gr.), afflicted or compressed. It is like a strait shoe that presses the foot. It is not easy walking in it, more than in such a shoe, or in a way where there is little room for the foot. Afflictions and temptations beset it, and it leads over the belly of natural inclinations; which march cannot be easy.

2*dly*, The unfrequentedness of it; few find it. There is no difficulty to find the wide gate, it glares in the eyes of every passenger; and no difficulty of entering by it. But there be few that so much as find the strait gate; they seek it not; blinded with corrupt lusts, they cannot take it up; and, consequently, few enter by it; either they perceive it not, or if they do, the straitness of it frights them.

3*dly*, and *Lastly*, The happy tendency and end of it, notwithstanding; (Gr.) which leadeth into life. It is not a stepping into it, but a going to it in a continued course. It leads away from the devil, the world, and the flesh; and brings at length through many a

weary step into eternal life in heaven. So all the hardship of the gate and way is recompensed at length in the end.

Several doctrines are deducible from the words.

Doctrine I. Whosoever would direct their course aright for the other world, must necessarily enter in by the strait gate.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is supposed in it.

II. Consider this strait gate.

III. The entering in by it.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. There are some truths supposed in this. It supposes, that,

1. All men here are on their journey to the other world; Eccl. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." This life is but the avenue to the other life, and this world but a thoroughfare to the other world; like a town lying on the road to a city, which passengers go through on their journey; Eccl. i. 4. However men talk, none have a tack of life. The young are but on their journey, even as the aged. All know what part of their way is passed, but none knows what remains.

2. We will all get there at length one way or other, without all peradventure. There is no doubt of finding a course that will carry us thither; all the difficulty is in falling on and steering the right course; Psalm xlix. 10. Many have taken journeys which they have never got to the end of; many have been baulked of the end of their intended journey, because they took the wrong way. But right or wrong, we will all get to the other world.

3. There is a wrong course for the other world, which we are in hazard of taking. It is a wrong one, as leading, though surely enough to the other world, yet to the wrong part of it, the land of death and destruction eternal; "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." And we are in hazard of taking that road; for the natural bent of our spirits lies that way. Satan is busy to decoy us into it, and the example of the throng of the world has great influence.

4. Yet there is a right course for that world too; a way to it opened, which if we can fall on, it will bring us safely to that part of the other world that is the land of eternal light and life. It is true, it was once blocked up; but Christ, by his obedience and death, hath opened it; Heb. x. 19, 20. This should be gladly received by us, since it is of such a vast moment to us.

5. It is possible we may fall on this right course. It is true, we cannot without serious consideration, and applying ourselves thereto; we will never stumble on it, nor snapper on it going at random, as we may on the course of destruction; but if we will hear the voice of Christ our director, and direct our course accordingly, we will not miss it; Prov. ix. 4—6; Psalm cxix. 9.

6. But naturally we are off that course: we have our entrance on it to make. Adam, and in him all mankind, was once upon the straight road to life: but there was such a mist raised by the breath of the old serpent, that he lost his way; and so we in him were led off the way; Rom. v. 12, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And now in the first place we are wandering on the mountains of vanity; there Christ finds us as strays, and gives us direction how to direct our course, where to enter, what to stand off from.

7. The gate we must enter by, is a strait one, not easily found, hard to enter by. The course to hell, is wide at the beginning of it, strait at the end, exceeding strait; Rom. ii. 9, "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil," &c. The course to heaven is strait at the first, and broad at the end; Rev. xxi. 7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Happy they who digest the straitening at first! they are in the way to eternal liberty; Rom. viii. 21.

8. *Lastly*, There is no gate but the strait one, to enter on that course by. There is no choice here, for heaven; for however men may imagine wide gates to it, the scripture acknowledges only a strait gate leading to it; so that he who cannot endure to think to be abridged of his liberty, or to thurst in by a strait gate, must give over thoughts of life in heaven.

II. We shall consider this strait gate. And here we shall shew,

1*st*, What that strait gate is.

2*dly*, What makes it so strait.

*First*, What is that strait gate? According to what was said in the explication of the words, it is the entrance into religion, whereby men become really religious; John x. 9, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," &c. Heb. iv. 3, "For we which have believed, do enter into rest," &c. This is conversion unto God, by faith in Jesus Christ; Hos. xiv. 1, compared with John xiv. 6. Hence the "door of faith;" Acts xiv. 27, is expounded of conversion; chap. xv. 3. This is the gate we must enter by. For,

1. This is the gate of the outer court of heaven, which one having entered through, he is immediately in the court of heaven; Heb. iv.

3, forecited. And he is so in the court of it, that he cannot miss it in the end; Phil. i. 6. No converts nor true believers can perish more than one can pluck out of Christ's hand what he minds to hold; John x. 28. And therefore they are reckoned "fellow-citizens with the saints;" Eph. ii. 19, making up one family with those above, chap. iii. 15. For the one are but within the house, the other are in the court of the house.

2. This is the gate by which men are set on the way to heaven, and begin their journey thitherward. They that have passed through this gate are travellers to Immanuel's land, now fairly upon the road; Cant. viii. 5, with the smell of heaven about them; chap. iii. 6. They are come out of Egypt, they have passed through the Red sea, and they are now in the wilderness, in their way to the promised land.

3. This is the gate that looks directly to the door of heaven, and by the way lands them in it. As the wide gate looks directly to hell, and lands the passengers there, if they go forward; so the entrance into real religion, by conversion, through faith, looks to heaven, and lands the passengers there.

4. This is the gate by which men turn their backs on the wide gate and broad way; for it is just opposite to them; Heb. iv. 10. Men may shift about from one way and course of life to another; but till they enter this gate, they are still in the broad way to destruction; Matth. xviii. 3, where there is room enough to shift to opposite sides. But once entered here, they are fairly separated from the world lying in wickedness, and joined in with the family of God; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, and they shall never mix with them again; Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

Now, this gate is a strait gate. The entrance into a course of ungodliness is not strait; nay, the entrance into a form of godliness is not strait; men may be got in there by the gentle bow of good education, like Joash; by a common easy work of the Spirit on their affections by the gospel; Matth. xiii. 20, 21; by the current example running strong that way at a time, like Simon; Acts viii. 12, 13. The straitest entrance into it, is by an abortive law-work, as the Israelites; Exod. xx. 18, 19. But even that is so wide, that it does not press the unholy heart to purity; Deut. v. 27, 29.

But the entrance into real religion by a sound conversion, is a strait gate, in these respects.

1. It is so strait that it is not easily taken up by the eye; Matth. vii. 14, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Most part of the

world never notice it, more than if there were not such a gate at all. How many live joyfully year after year, never once troubling their heads with the question, What conversion is? whether they be as yet converted or not? When the Spirit of the Lord begins to deal with others, they mistake it for melancholy fancies. Yea, many times the parties themselves do not know what it is that is dealing with them, for a time, and it remains still a mystery in great measure, John iii. 8. Masters in Israel this day own it not; but instead thereof set up the reforming of vicious habits, and applying to the practice of virtue, with as little success towards reforming the generation, as there is truth in the principle; though, if we had it, it would not carry us beyond the length of some Pagan moralists.

2. It is hard entering into it at all. Many seeing it at a distance, are frightened from it by the straitness of it, John vi. 60, 66. Many entered actually, come out again, and make their escape from it, unable to bear the pressure of the very first entry, like Felix, Acts xxiv. 25, who trembled at Paul's preaching, and said to him, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Sound conviction of the sin of our life and nature, with the misery we are therefore liable to, will bring a man to his knees, and straiten and press him sore; like those, Acts ii. 37, who "were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Many a man in the entry of it comes to think, that he will never get through, but that he will certainly die in his birth.

3. The passage through it is difficult. Sometimes it is shorter, sometimes longer; and often does men's want of wisdom make it longer than otherwise it would be, Hos. xiii. 13. But short or long, it is difficult for the time.

(1.) For men cannot get the scope there, that they were wont to have. They are abridged of their sinful liberty. Hence they give many a greedy look back to the flesh-pots of Egypt; which they would actually turn back to, were there not a strong hand pushing them forward, 2 Thess. i. 11.

(2.) They cannot get up their head there; but must as it were creep through on their knees. There is a power from heaven that brings down the man from his former heights. The converting word to Zaccheus was a humbling word, "Come down," Luke xix. 5. And if there was no mystery in these words, but they only looked to his coming down from the tree, whence arose that mighty change immediately wrought on him? Nay, converting work is soul-humbling work, Acts ix. 6; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. And they will never get up their head, till they be through at God in Christ by faith, Acts xv. 11.

(3.) They are pressed there, to the laying aside of all their super-

fluities that they were wont to carry along with them, James i. 21. There is no room in the gate for them, and these too. Christ says, "If ye take me, let these go away." Hence the wise merchant sells all, and buys the pearl. It presses not only to the purging of the life of some sins, but all sins, even the darling idol among the rest; and not of the life only, but the heart too, Psalm xxiv. 3, 4.

*Secondly*, What makes this gate, the entrance into religion, so strait?

1. The mighty contrariety of our nature to it, Rom. viii. 7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Take a fish out of the water into the open fields, it is restless; it pants as if it were pent up in the narrowest space. There is a strong propensity in our nature to evil, and aversion to God and goodness; so that much of the power of converting grace is employed in making the soul willing, Psalm cx. 3. And when it is made willing, it is presently through the gate; the main work is done, the soul readily comes to God through Christ.

2. The various lusts hanging about the soul. The gate is room enough for receiving the man; but it is strait and pinching to him, when he comes with all these about him.

(1.) There is a variety of these lusts unmortified about every unrenewed man, Tit. iii. 3. They hang about him like a numerous family to be fed, crying, Give, give. When the man comes to the gate, he finds it strait, for there is an old man with him, that is to be put off, which there is no access for into the house, Eph. iv. 22. But they are loth to part.

(2.) These lusts are of a swelling nature at all times. They are the ill weeds in the ground of the corrupt heart, that wax well. He brings with him wide desires, that would require much room, Hab. ii. 5. And therefore because they must be pressed till they be contracted, and brought to one for all, the gate feels strait, Psalm xxvii. 4.

(3.) They swell in a particular manner when one is entering the gate; Rom. vii. 9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The law, closely applied to an unrenewed heart, has an irritating power upon it; that is, lusts, that, in time of security, lay dormant, awaken for their own defence, when there is an attack made on them to throw them out. They lift up themselves then, and move like an ant's nest stirred and disturbed; and like a furious horse, that rages the more he is checked.

3. The keen opposition made by Satan to the soul's entry. When the soul begins to entertain thoughts of turning to God, hell is alarmed,

and its forces brought out to oppose with all vigour, Rev. xii. 12. They whom he disturbed not, while his goods were in peace, are then dogged with temptations, and all oars are laid to the water to row them against the stream that flows from the Spirit of God to carry them into real religion. Satan plies then with,

(1.) The force of the example of the multitude, Acts xxviii. 22. He presses them with the odiousness of being singular in the world; that if there were such danger in the broad way, it could not be so throng, that with the multitude there is safety, and if it be ill with them, it will be ill with many. That failing, he plies the temptation,

(2.) Of time enough after, what needs to turn to such a strict course so soon? The young get, by the sleight of hell, a fair broad view of many years they have to come, wherein they may get all done at leisure, in time enough; and by that means the time of youth is given up with many to the broad way; the entering on religion in earnest being put off, till once they be settled in the world. When that is come, then they find they have another thing to care for, for that time, Luke xiv. 20; and it is put off to old age, which most part never see. But if they do, custom in sin has taken away the sense of it; and it is put off to a death-bed; and if they get it, there the toss of sickness renders them incapable; or when their time comes at last, the wind from heaven rises not; so they sink in the harbour, never get away to the gate. But if that will not do,

(3.) They are plied with their being too-long a-doing, and that the time is past, the day of grace over; to drive them to despair with Judas. Satan will run with them from one extreme to another; and from defender of the secure, he will turn accuser of the awakened. He will preach to them then the justice of God, to persuade them he will be inexorable; he will muster up their sins before them, to render them hopeless; and shew them their repeated slights of Christ, to bear them in hand that they have forfeited the benefit of his mediation.

(4.) *Lastly*, And for that cause he will dog them with temptations to sin, more than ordinary, that finding corruption more strong and prevalent than before, they may be brought to quit hopes of ever obtaining the victory.

4. The enmity of the world against religion, 1 Cor. xvi. 9, "There are many adversaries." These are set up to nip the work of heaven in the bud, and to mar any good work as it begins to appear, Cant. ii. 15. The carnal world is the great agent for Satan, and carries on his work in this case by giving instruction causing to err, by force, or by fraud, by mockeries, or by slight healing of the wounded.

5. *Lastly*, The nature of the thing makes it a strait gate. A law-work cannot miss to be straitening to a sinner. Conviction of sin, of heart, lip, life, and nature, cannot but press sore; the spirit of bondage, girding the soul with the cords of death, and the curse of the broken law, makes a strait entry, Rom. viii. 15. And it will be a hard pull for an awakened, law-condemned, and self-condemned creature, to gripe, and hold the gripe of the promise of grace in Christ.

III. We shall consider the entering in by the strait gate. And here three things must be spoke to.

1*st*, What they enter into by it.

2*dly*, How they enter in.

3*dly*, What this entering bears.

*First*, What do they enter into by the strait gate? They enter by it,

1. Immediately into the narrow way of the practice of religion, in a holy life and walk suited to the Gospel, Acts ii. 41, 42. There it is the strait gate sets them. How long there way may be from the gate to the house, they know not; but once entered, they hold on,

(1.) In a new road, a quite new one; 2 Cor. v. 17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold all things are become new." They enter into a new road they never travelled before, where they have a new rule to walk by, new company to walk with, a new guide to follow after, a new scope and end to aim at. And thus are they entered, as it were, into a new world, being no more of this world, though in it.

(2) In a safe road, however unacquainted with it they were before; Prov. i. 33, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Before they entered the strait gate, they were in a most dangerous road, however easy and safe it appeared, Prov. ix. 17, 18; but then they are entered into a safe one, however dangerous it appears. It is covered above, that no storms of wrath can fall there; and what rises from below, they will get safely through, Cant. iii. 11.

2. Mediately, they enter by it into heaven. That is the house the strait gate looks to, which none can come into but by that gate; and all that come in by that gate do certainly reach it at length, Matth. xviii. 3, Acts iii. 19. Thus entering by the strait gate, they enter at length,

(1.) Into a roomy-house; John xiv. 2, "In my Father's house are many mansions." How strait soever the gate is, there is no straitening in the house; while they that took the wide gate, shall

when they come to their house, be straitened like prisoners crammed together in a pit; they that enter the strait gate, shall in their house walk at liberty in white.

(2.) Into a house of all ease and fulness, Rev. xxi. 7. There will be nothing wanting there for their satisfaction. If it was with much anxiety, fear, and sorrow, they got through the strait gate; yet there will not be the least vestige of these things there; Rev. xxi. 4, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away;" but they will, by entering the strait gate, enter into joy; whereas others, by entering the wide one, shall enter into eternal anguish.

*Secondly*, How do they enter in by this gate? They enter in by it,

1. Coming out of themselves, Matth. xvi. 24. God by his spirit sets fire to their nest, and brings them out there. He opens their eyes in conviction, pricks them to the heart in compunction, brings them down to the dust in contrition and humiliation; till he overturns the foundations of the house of their former rest, and leaves them not a foot to stand on. They are made to despair of salvation by themselves. Their former gain is counted loss, Phil. iii. 7, 8, and they are carried off their own bottom, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life in heaven.

2. Coming to Christ in the free promise of the Gospel by faith, John x. 9. Many think this an easy step; but so far from it, that if there is not an arm of omnipotence to thrust the soul forward, it will never make that part of the strait gate, Isa. liii. 1. Meanwhile, the Spirit of God deals with the enterer rationally; so that seeing all refuge else failed, he cannot go back, but thrusts forward to Christ in the free promise, Jer. ii. 22, 23, like the drowning man clevering* to the rope at all adventures.

3. Coming unto God by Christ; Hos. xiv. 1, compared with John xiv. 6. This is conversion, which true coming unto Christ always terminates in; Heb. vii. 25. For man having by sin turned away from God as his God, Lord, Lawgiver, and Master; the Mediator Christ was sent, to bring us back to him again; 1 Pet. iii. 18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And by faith in Christ we do come back to him, to live to him, and for him; Acts xx. 21. This shows the faith of many in Christ to be but pretended; while by it they do not return to God as their Lord and Lawgiver, to live to and for him; Matth. xiii. 20, 21.

* Griping hastily.

*Thirdly*, What does this entering bear which we must set ourselves for?

1. A discerning of the gate, the strait gate; Matth. vii. 14. Many had travelled over that spot of ground called Bethel; Gen. xxviii., who never discerned the gate of heaven there; but Jacob saw it, verse 17. So, many go up and down the world, come to ordinances, where the gate is pointed out; and yet are never able to take it up. Nay, that gate is to us like the well to Hagar; Gen. xxi. never seen by us till the Lord open our eyes. O pray, that God may discover this gate to you.

2. A finding of an absolute necessity of entering by it; Luke xv. 17. We will never enter there, while we are careless and indifferent about our state in the other world; while we have the folly to think, that we may get a wide gate to heaven. This foolish imagination ruins thousands. What need they straiten themselves, entering by the strait gate, while a more roomy one will do as well? But ye must be convinced, that the strait gate, and it only, is that by which you can ever get there.

3. Resolnteness for a happy arrival in another world at any rate; Matth. xi. 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Till once men come to this, they will never enter the strait gate; or if they do, they will never go through. The enterers are all such as must be forward, cost what it will; because they see they are ruined for ever, if they get not forward; Luke xv. 17, 18.

4. A contentment to forego our present ease, in order to our getting safe to the other world; Matth. xxvi. 24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This life is appointed of God for our trial with hardship and labour, and the place of rest for the labourers is in the other. But O how hard is it to bring sinners to be content to forego their ease for the present! They hang by the soft easy course till their nest be fired, and their bed of sloth be strewed with thorns and briars, that there is no rest there any longer; Prov. vi. 9, 10; Acts ii. 37. But till once they are brought content to sacrifice their ease, there is no entering.

5. A resolute entering into the gate; Luke xv. 18. However strait and uncouth it appears, they will not be frightened from it. They dare no more meddle with the wide gate, considering whereto it leads. The soul in this case is like the slayer fleeing to the city of refuge, who, whatever difficulties be in the way, breaks through them, till he be within the gates of it.

6. *Lastly*, A resolute going through it, without turning back from

it, as Felix did ; Acts xxiv. 25 ; or sticking in it as Ephraim ; Hos. xiii. 13. However strait the gate is, the true enterer will thrust forward, striving against all difficulties, and restless till he get forward to God in Christ ; Luke xiii. 24. For he sees, that till he be there, there is no safety, how easy soever the blind world is.

Use 1. Of Information. This informs us, that,

1. No body walking carelessly, inconsiderately, and at all adventures, will ever get a safe arrival that way in the other world. They may go to the pit that way; for sleeping or waking they go with the stream, and it will carry them down ; but the course to heaven is rowing against the stream, that will never do at this rate. Wherefore there is need of consideration, and working out our salvation ; Phil. ii. 12.

2. They must begin well who would end well ; and enter by the strait gate, who would lodge for ever in the roomy and spacious house above. It is the narrow way that leads to life, the strait gate that enters into the narrow way. To expect life then without entering by the strait gate, is a vain thing ; it is in effect to think that holding the course to hell in this life, we shall for all that land in heaven at death. "But (Gal. vi. 7) be not deceived ; God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." An ungodly life will make a wretched end.

3. There is a necessity to bestir ourselves, lay salvation to heart, and see what course we take for the other world. The secure sinner must awake, lest he sleep the sleep of death ; 1 Cor. xv. 34, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." The careless, thoughtless about eternity, must begin to look to himself, that he do not perish ; Prov. vi. 9, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard ? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep ?" There is a strait gate before us, which we will not get into sleeping ; and if we get not into it, and through it too, we are gone.

4. There is an absolute necessity of conversion for every one of us ; for that is the strait gate we must enter by, if ever we come to heaven ; Matth. xviiii. 3, "Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." If there is not a work of converting grace wrought on us, we will never get to glory. We are so totally corrupted by nature, that if there is not such a change made on us as amounts to a new birth, we cannot see heaven ; John iii. 5, 6, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We are so far off the way naturally, that we must be converted.

5. They do but deceive themselves, who imagine they are in the narrow way to life, who are yet strangers to a work of conversion.

That is an entering into religion, without coming in by the door, but climbing up some other way. And to such may that be applied; John x. 8, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." It is lamentable, that so few appear to betake themselves to the way of religion; and that among the few who do, there are so many who miss or neglect the first step. Many come too easily by their religion; and so fares of it, it comes to no good account in the end.

6. *Lastly*, Vain are their pretences to religion, and vain are their hopes of heaven, who are so prejudiced at religious strictness, that they cannot endure it, nor think of being bound up to it. What is that, but to be utterly averse to the strait gate and narrow way? And where is such people's religion for the present, and what hopes can they have of heaven for the future? Will the course of the world, the wide way, ever bring them thither? Will men pretend to be followers of Christ, and yet be loathers of religious strictness? Or will they think to be partakers of heaven, and yet not be followers of Christ?

Use 2. Of Reproof. It serves to reprove,

1. Those who are unconcerned to direct their course aright for the other world. And such are all they who make no inquiry for the strait gate, nor trouble their heads about it. It is an evidence they are not for Zion; Jer l. 4, 5. It had been better for these had they never heard the gospel; for at this rate they slight the warning Christ has given; they neglect the gate he is pointing out to them; and they say in effect, What needs all this ado about the other world, and the safe gate to it?

2. Those who keep by the wide gate, despising the strait one, and hope to do well enough in the end too. Truly this is to hope that the Bible will be found a fable; and all the warnings of danger to sinners, mere scarecrows. Such may read their doom; Deut. xxix. 19, 20, "And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book, shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." And in end they will find it not a sound of big words, but such as will press them down for ever.

3. Those who will neither enter themselves, nor suffer others so far as they can hinder them; Matth. xxiii. 13. There is a generation of enemies to the strait gate, who do what they can to keep

others from it, as well as themselves, and so vent the malignity of their disposition against religion. They lay all the hindrances in their way that they can; take all opportunities to discourage them in any attempts that way; they lay out themselves to tempt them to evil, and lead them into sin. Alas! whose work is it ye do, when ye do so? Is it God's work, Christ's work? Surely ye cannot imagine that. Nay, it is Satan's work, who himself is busy at it, whom you serve; and your reward will be accordingly. Particularly,

4. Mockers of religious exercise, who make a jest of seriousness and of serious persons. We are warned, that in the last days there should be such; 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Observe of them that they were profane; for none but those of very profane spirits will dare to jest on sacred things. They are atheistical; for none that have the belief of the being of a God to judge them, and of the Bible's being really his word, will be a scoffer at others for regarding it. O that such would consider their danger, the bands that are abiding them for their looseness; Isa. xxviii. 22, "Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong."

5. *Lastly*, Those who being employed to direct others what course to take for the other world, make no conscience of directing them to the strait gate. They call to them continually, Do, do this and the other duty, exercise this and the other virtue, without endeavouring to lead them to Christ in the first place, and the great duty of believing in him; as if men needed nothing but application or plying themselves to make them Christians. But conversion to God by his Spirit is overlooked; and vital union with Christ, the necessary spring of all holy obedience; John xv. 5, is neglected; Eph. ii. 10.

Use 3. Of Exhortation. Then, as ever you would direct your course aright for the other world, enter ye in by the strait gate. I shall branch out this in two particulars.

*First*, As ever ye would direct your course aright for the other world, lay aside your prejudices against religious strictness; lay your account with, and peremptorily set yourselves for thrusting through the strait gate into the narrow way, that so ye may get to heaven, bidding farewell to the wide way of the world. This exhortation is,

1. For the young that are setting out in the world. I would have you to set out in the mean time for the other world too; because

whether you do it or not, ye are really going thither; and how soon you may be there, you know not. And pray take heed how you direct your course at that time of day; for according as ye begin then, ye will readily hold on after; Prov. xxii. 6, "Train up a child in the way that he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." O have a care that prejudices against religious strictness get not a seat in you; but be ye reconciled to it, and set to it in earnest.

2. For the aged that are gone out into the world. I would have you to set out at length for the other world also, directing your course aright thither; the rather that ye are far on already in the way to it, and for the most part off the right way as yet. It is high time you were begun to change your course, lest, if ye go on any longer, ye harden in an ill course without remedy.

Many are the prejudices both old and young have against religious strictness, the conceited hardships of it, the singularity and unfashionableness of it, and many others I shall not now stand upon. But pray, let what our Saviour here advances against them, serve to strike the bottom out of them all; that is, the absolute necessity of it. In vain do men dispute about a way to a place, and object against it as rough, &c., when there is no other way to it; for in that case it is plain, they must either take the way as it is, or give over thoughts of the place.

Now, our Lord has told us, "The gate is strait;" and I would therefore have you to set yourselves for it, strait as it is; and peremptorily to lay your account with enduring hardness now, in firm hope that so you may safely arrive at length in the other world, where ye shall walk at liberty. Bid an eternal farewell then to the wide gate and way, and be resolute to enter and go through the strait one.

Motive 1. All prejudices you entertain against religious strictness, are in favour of the corruption of your nature; and does that need any thing to feed and strengthen it? 2 Thess. ii. 12. Do but impartially consider any one prejudice you have against it; and you will find it is in favour of some one lust or other, and that it is a screen to defend it; Rom. i. 18, compared with Jer. ii. 25. It is the corrupt affection biasseth the judgment, and sets men on palliating licentious courses, and unfavourably representing religious strictness. And judge ye, what must be the issue of feeding the corruption of our nature which is to be mortified.

2. All the difficulty of religious strictness ariseth only from corruption in ourselves and others; Rom. vii. 14, "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Religious

strictness is in heaven carried to its utmost pitch; Rev. xxi. 27, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Yet there they are at perfect liberty; Rom viii. 21. Why? because corruption is purged out. Learn therefore, that any uneasiness there is in religious strictness, the blame of it is not to be laid at religion's door, but our own. Religious strictness grates only on,

(1.) Our own corrupt hearts; as the shoe straitens and pains the sore foot, and cannot be suffered on it, though it was very easy while the foot was whole; Rom. vii. 23, 24. Though we would think it intolerable to be held any considerable time in the water, the fish are not at all straitened in it; for it is agreeable to their nature; and so would the way to holiness be to a holy heart. Now, a course of life grating on the corruptions of our hearts, is even as necessary for our partaking of Christ's eternal salvation, as Christ's course of suffering in his life and death was for the purchase of it; Gal. v. 24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

(2.) A corrupt sinful world; Rev. vi. 10. They cannot endure it; they wonder what should carry any unto it, and they are apt to reproach one for it; 1 Pet. iv. 4, "Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, "speaking evil of you." No great wonder the dempster's voice grate on the malefactor's ears; for he pronounceth his doom; and so do the godly by their religious strictness pronounce doom against the wicked; Heb. xi. 7. But why do we care to please the world lying in wickedness, in those things that will sink them in ruins? or seek to walk with them with whom we should not lodge at the journey's end?

3. The greatest difficulty in religious strictness, is at first entering into it. It is with religion as with other useful and profitable courses of life, trades, or employments; the greatest hardship is at the beginning; afterwards it becomes more easy through use; Matth. xi. 29, 30. May be some's experience may contradict this; it is a good while since they attempted, and it is as hard this day as then. What is the reason of that? Ye are ay but beginning, ye do not hold close to it. So it fares with you as with children at school, who being every now and then kept at home, learning is a constant pain to them; whereas it turns easy to them that are held close to it; Prov. ii. 1—6. Therefore be peremptory, and resolute, and constant; and of a truth it will be otherwise.

4. Whether would ye choose your eternal state with the religi-

ously strict, or with the more gay and world-like part of mankind, that walk more loosely? No doubt that will be the language of every heart; Numb. xxiii. 10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Then pray live with them, and walk with them. If ye like their end, lay by your prejudices against their way, in which they walk unto it. If ye have a horror of the end of them that walk loosely, and yet like their way best, ye will be self-condemned. If ye would go east, ye would not travel with the company going west.

5. *Lastly*, Religious strictness is the only course in which any will get to heaven; the loose course will land men in destruction. The text is very express; and makes no exception of great or small, rich or poor, young or old. There is no body, but will be straitened sometime or other; it is impossible that any should get always walking at liberty. Choose ye then, whether ye will take your straitening before or after death, for time or for eternity.

If ye imagine that some were far from religious strictness, that yet got to heaven at length, consider then they were brought to repentance for their neglect of it. And will ye follow a pattern, that those who gave it bitterly repented of? If ye do, ye must follow it out in repentance too, else ye are ruined. And is it a wise course, to be laying up matter for repentance, and to stand off from a course, the neglect whereof ye must repent, or ye perish? Pray consider that repentance will be more easy now than on the brink of eternity; and it will be more sure too, for it is what very rarely is reached at that time of day.

As for some directions or helps, I offer only these two.

1. Set before you, in the first place, the death of Christ, for your justification and reconciliation with God, deliverance from the curse and eternal wrath; and by faith flee in under the covert of his blood, for these effects. Without these men may reach civility, the moralist his practice of virtue, the legalist a form of godliness; but no true religious strictness, more than the cursed fig tree could ever bear fruit after, Luke i. 74, 75.

2. Set before you the life of Christ in the world, as the rule, the reason, and the endearment of religious strictness. Every Christian should set before him the life of Christ, and often view it, for it is,

(1.) The rule of religious strictness, the example and pattern we are to copy after, John xiii. 15, 1 Peter ii. 21, 1 John ii. 6. Here it is we have the perfect draught of religious strictness. The strictest of the saints have had their out-of-the-way steps; vain men have pieces of strictness, which is not according to this pattern, being nothing but the product of their blind and proud minds. But

in the example of Christ we have a perfect pattern of religious strictness; for in him we see what is the sort of walk really pleasing to God, in as much as we see there how God himself become man did walk. And when he has condescended to this, will we not eye it?

(2.) The reason. We have the naked divine authority, call, and command to religious strictness in the law. In the life of Christ we have that authority enforced by his own example, obliging us the more forcibly unto it. The example of superiors is an additional law, binding the inferiors to conformity. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme, the most high God, as well as he is man; and since he was man, he was religiously strict; certainly, for that very reason we should be so too.

(3.) The endearment. How forcible is that exhortation to religious strictness! Eph. v. 1, 2, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." There is no such powerful remedy against prejudices at religious strictness, as the believing consideration of the death of Christ. Is it possible that faith's view of the death of Christ should leave us indifferent to, and far more averse to the life of Christ? No, sure; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Let your consciences be sprinkled with his blood, and your hearts will be knit to religious strictness. But alas! it is want of faith in his death, that makes us so indifferent to the imitation of him in his life of religious strictness.

*Secondly*, As ever ye would direct your course aright for the other world, be concerned, that, in the first place, ye may be truly converted; that ye may be found converts in the first place, entering the strait gate by a work of thorough conversion wrought on you.

Motive 1. Consider the necessity of conversion to God. It is absolutely necessary by our Saviour's declaration; Matth. xviii. 3, "Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and by the nature of things too; for how is it possible they should walk with God in the narrow way, who have not entered by the strait gate, being once truly turned to God? This is the beginning of the Christian course, without which it is impossible there should be any progress in it, or happy end thereof.

Motive 2. To think to be truly religious, without being once true converts, is a vain thing, a delusion, because a contradiction. It is

a building on the earth without a foundation; Luke vi. 49, which can turn to no good account in the end. True religion is to walk in Christ; but one must first be in him; Col. ii. 16, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." It is to walk in newness of life, but we must be new creatures first; Rom. vi. 4. It is to walk with God, but we must first be converted to him.

Motive 3. Without it all your religion will amount to no more but a form of godliness destitute of the power; 2 Tim. iii. 5. It will be but as a body without the soul; and all your services will be but bodily exercise, that will profit little. "For God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in truth," John iv. 24. But how can that be without conversion? Phil. iii. 3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit." Though the wall is fair plastered, it is loose in the heart; and so makes but a fair show, like a whited sepulchre.

Motive 4. *Lastly*, The want of it is a spring of apostasy; 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us." How many do for a time blossom fair in religion, who at length totally wither? They give their names to Christ pretending to have separated from the world; but afterwards they turn deserters, and get away to the enemy's camp. Why, truly, if they had ever by sound conversion come out from among them, they had never gone back; Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." But the axe of converting grace never went to the root of the tree with them; wherefore though some branches of sin were lopt off, the root of bitterness untouched, spreads again. For your help here, labour to impress your hearts with concern to have a good foundation laid. And,

1. Think it not enough to reform your lives, and to cleanse the outward man. Remember religion is the hidden man of the heart; 1 Sam. xvi. 7. So the power of the natural enmity must be broken, and the heart reconciled to the holy law, not in some, but in every point thereof known to you; Heb. viii. 10, "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." For this only is true conversion, the heart being turned back again to God; 1 Kings xviii. 37, in cordial reconciliation with and absolute resignation to his holy will expressed in his law.

2. For this cause, ye would study to discern the law in its spirituality and vast extent, and closely apply it to your own soul's state and case. Here Paul's conversion began; Rom. vii. 9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." By this means ye will be convinced of the total corruption of your nature, heart, and life; what a gulph of guilt ye are sunk in under the curse; the which may fill you with fear, sorrow, and anxious concern what course to take to be saved. Then study to discern the promise of the gospel in its sufficiency and suitableness to your case; and to see Christ in it; and closely apply that to your own soul. For this is it that completes conversion; Heb. vii. 19, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God." By this means ye will be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, as a suitable Saviour, having a fulness of grace in him to be communicated for your regeneration, and a fulness of merit to carry off your guilt; which will be a fit means to raise in you a desire of him, and hope of remedy through him; and so to draw you to him by faith, and by him unto God.

Doctrine II. There is a wide gate to enter by, and a broad way joining it; but it leads away to destruction.

Here we shall consider,

I. The wide gate there is to enter in by.

II. The broad way joining the wide gate.

III. This way's leading away to destruction.

IV. *Lastly*, Improve the subject.

I. We shall consider the wide gate there is to enter in by. Were there no other but the strait gate in the course to the other world, then there would be no fear of going wrong, all behoved to go that way, or not at all; and it would have been so, if there had been no part of the other world but the happy one. But there is another part of that world, a hell as well as a heaven; and so there is a gate towards the former as well as the latter; and that is the wide one, which we are to beware of.

According to what is said of the strait, the wide gate is the entrance into a course of ungodliness, whereby men become actually ungodly. Thus men set their face towards hell, and begin to move toward the land of darkness; Eph. ii. 1, 2. Whensoever this entrance is made, then they are on the course whose end is destruction; and it is made very early.

And that entrance or wide gate, is the gate of the corrupt natural inclination of the heart; Prov. iv. 23; Mark vii. 21—23. This gate

begins to open to us with the first dawnings of reason, and opens wider and wider as we grow up; Gen. viii. 21. Our first looks in the world are asquint; we discover a cast to the wrong side, an averseness to good, and proneness to evil; Rom. viii. 7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." That is the natural inclination of the heart, that soon shows itself in what we call the innocent babe, and widens more and more through the several periods of childhood, youth, and manhood; Prov. xxii. 15.

This gate was set up by Adam's fall; Rom. v. 12. He breaking the first covenant, broke out this gate to destruction, to and in himself and all his posterity; and mankind naturally rush in at it, not considering whereto it leads. Besides this, there had never been another gate to the other world, for fallen man, had not Jesus Christ by his suffering, life, and death, opened it.

This gate is a two-leaved gate, opening wide.

1*st*, On the one hand, it opens wide toward the creature, away from God; Jer. ii. 13. That is the way the natural inclination of the heart lies. When God made man he gave him a set of heart towards himself as his rest and happiness; Eccl. vii. 29, "God made man upright:" without any motion towards the creature, but in God and for God; and good reason, for all the good of the creature lay there, it being otherwise but a cypher signifying nothing without him; Matth. xix. 17. But Satan in the first temptation set up the creature separately from God, and over-against him; and though so it was mere emptiness, he blew it up with wind from hell, and made it appear a rest for the heart, and cheated our first parents into a choice of it for their rest; Gen. iii. 6. So the first leaf was opened, and has stood open to this day with mankind. And this I say,

(1.) Opens wide towards the creature, the vain and empty creation; Hab. ii. 5, compared with Prov. xxx. 15, 16. As the beasts incline to the earth, the birds to the air, and the fishes to the water; so does fallen man to the creature. He knows no other happiness naturally, desires no other, cannot understand how there can be another. He falls as naturally to seek it here, as the infant to suck the breasts that bare it.

This is a broad leaf, opening very wide; because of the boundless desires of the heart to be satisfied, the vast variety of the creatures to try the experiment on, and the insufficiency and unsatisfactoriness of them all; Eccl. i. 2; Isaiah lv. i. 2. The wide hungry heart that is without God, the wide world filled with nothing but vanity and lies, makes the leaf of the natural inclination to the creature very wide.

(2.) It opens a way from God; Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, breth-

ren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." It is not possible, but that the heart turning to the creature for a rest and happiness, must turn away from God; Matth. vi. 24, "For no man can serve two masters." The heart of man naturally contracting a friendship with the world, states and declares an enmity against God; James iv. 4, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." And the children of men setting out in the world, while they set their face thus to the creature, cast God behind their back; Ezek. xxiii. 35. They know him not, desire him not; it is a mystery to them, how the enjoyment of him can make one happy; they are apt to think it is but a fancy; Psalm iv. 6.

Thus this natural inclination of the heart to the creature is the one leaf of the wide gate. But here it is

OBJECTED, How can the inclination of the heart to the creature be accounted a leaf of the gate to hell, when every creature of God is good, and we are allowed the enjoyment of it, and an inclination towards it is lawful, and in several cases expressly required?

ANSW. The creature may be considered two ways. (1.) By itself, separately from God. (2.) In God and for him. The first way it is regarded as a fountain and original spring to drink at for satisfaction; in the other, as a stream only coming from God, and leading back to him. Now, it is not in the latter, but the former respect, that we call the inclination to it a leaf of the broad gate. And it is in that first respect that the heart is naturally inclined to it. Upon it, separately from God, the heart naturally fixes, looking for that from it, which it should only look for in God; whereby it is put in the room of God. And this godless pursuit of the creature, separately from God, not in him; for itself, and ourself, not for God, was never allowable, and is no other but the course of them that are gone in at the wide gate; Eph. iv. 17, 18. Consider here,

1. The inclination to it separate from God, plainly discovering itself, in either a profane neglect of him, or else a crafty shifting of him, in our desires after, or enjoyment of the creature. No doubt one may lawfully have an inclination towards health, wealth, relations, &c. But then it should be in God; in his fear, regulated by his word; but as an incast to the great bargain of his favour, not as a principal. But the generality of men quite neglect him in these, Psalm x. 4, while others that have some principles formed in them, craftily lay the thoughts of him aside in these things, that they may not be hampered in their desire or enjoyment of the creature; Jer.

ix. 6. A glaring evidence of inclination to it separate from God.

2. The inclination to it for it or ourselves, not for God, discovering itself, in that there is no regard had, in the desire, or enjoyment, to the honour of God to be advanced thereby, but to please ourselves merely; though (1 Cor. x. 31,) "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God." It is purely something in the creature itself, not any thing of God about it, that grounds the inclination to it; and that is a piece of spiritual idolatry, and a debasing of the soul, to desire any creature for itself merely.

2*dly*, On the other side, it opens wide towards sin, away from the holiness of God expressed in his law; Psalm lviii. 3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray, as soon as they be born, speaking lies." When God made man, he gave him a set of heart towards holiness, Eccl. vii. 29, so that as God himself was the rest of his heart and portion, so his holy will and law was the rule of his walk. But the heart of man falling out of its rest in God, unto the godless pursuit of the creature, the yoke of obedience to him came to be thrown off. So the natural inclination of the heart opens wide,

(1.) To sin; Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" The taste is quite vitiated; nothing relishes with men naturally but sin. As, on the one hand, they go to the creature, to suck its dry breasts; so, on the other, they are bent on the fulsome breasts of their corrupt lusts; Eph. ii. 3. These corrupt lusts as so many brats of hell, naturally bred in the heart, open their mouths wide, crying, Give, Give; and nothing can satisfy them, but the puddle waters of sin, which are agreeable to their nature.

(2.) Away from the holiness of God expressed in his law; Rom. viii. 7. There is not only a carelessness or an indifferency to holiness, but an aversion to it; such as an untamed bullock has to the yoke. Hence holy walking and spiritual exercises, are naturally burdensome to the corrupt heart, which loves sinful liberty, and hates to be hampered by the holy commandment. So that what of these the man is in a sort brought to, it is but bodily exercise, the heart is not in it, Exek. xxxiii. 31.

This also is a broad leaf, opening very wide. For the corruption of nature is an unfathomable gulph, that there is no filling up of; the sinner may be surfeited, but never can be satiated. The way of sin, as being the way of error or wandering, has no end; one evil step still leading on to, and making way for another. Thus ye see the wide gate, that, opening to all the children of fallen Adam,

they are all ready disposed to inter into. Which entering is next to be noticed.

The entering into this wide gate is, the giving way to the corrupt natural inclination of the heart; the not resisting of it, but yielding unto it; Rom, vi. 12, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." This gate should of right be closed; the bitter fountain should be stopt immediately, the weeds of corruption should be nipt in the bud, and men should presently begin a war with themselves in mortification of their lusts. But instead of that, they soon begin to follow the corrupt natural inclination; and that in,

1. Giving way to the vanity of their minds; Eph. iv. 17. They find in them a restless heart, and they go in pursuit of that rest, not to God, but to the creature. Man's mind is naturally blinded; and what it points out to him for happiness and satisfaction, he pursues; the heart going as the vain mind leads. Thus men are lured on. The vain mind first points out a satisfaction to us in meat, then in gay clothing, then in mirth and jollity; at length it opens as we grow up, into the wide field of pleasures, profits, and honours; and here men wander as in a wilderness, seeking rest, thinking to find it in this and the other vanity, and still disappointed; yet after all disappointments, the vain mind still has a new vanity to present unto us, and we go to it with new hopes of satisfaction; Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope; thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved." Now, the engaging in this pursuit is entering the wide gate with a witness.

2. Giving way to the corrupt bent of the heart towards sin, and against the way of holiness; Rom. iii. 11, 12, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one." Lusts begin to stir in the heart, and crave of them; and instead of starving them, they begin to think of feeding and satisfying them. So they break over the hedge of the divine law, and get into the devil's ground, omitting their duty to God, and committing sin against him, in compliance with the natural inclination. This also is a plain entering of the wide gate. Now, there is a twofold entering this wide gate.

1*st*, One that is more secret and undiscerned to the party himself. Thus we are all once entered into it, ere ever we are aware, by the early sproutings of corruption in childhood; doing sinfully and corruptly ere ever we begin to consider what we are doing, Psalm lviii. 3; Prov. xx. 11. Thus we are entered into the service of sin and

Satan, ere we begin to consider who or what they are. And where pains are not taken by good education to curb these early sproutings, they grow readily too strong afterwards to be holden down, either by one or other; Prov. xxix. 15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

2*dly*, Another that is more deliberate, and of choice. Thus when the children of men are come to the years of discretion, and can discern between good and evil, they see on the one hand the strait gate of religion, and the wide gate of sin and vanity; and having a bias and cast in their nature to the wrong side, they refuse the strait gate and choose the wide one as the most agreeable to them, Jer. ii. 25. Of this there are three more notable kinds.

1. The throwing off the bonds of good education, as things wherewith they are hampered. Thus many set out into the broad way, and land in destruction at length, Prov. v. 11—13. Parental government is the first government that God puts us under; therefore in the Proverbs written to give the young knowledge the very first exhortation is; ver. 8, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." How dangerous must it then be, either to throw it off before God takes it off; or when he has, to throw off the impressions made thereby? None of them can be, but in compliance with the corrupt natural inclination to give it the swing.

2. Casting one's self into ill company. The second exhortation in the Proverbs respects that; ver. 10, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." We are so ready to be cast into the mould of the company we choose, especially if it be ill, that when one is so engaged, he may be reckoned to be gone in at the wide gate. If he had no mind to go with them, why would he choose their fellowship?

3. Apostatizing from a profession and appearance of religion; when one having for some time given promising tokens of a religious disposition, throws off all, and goes plainly into the way of the profane world; Heb. x. 38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

The snare leading to this is readily the predominant sin. That makes its entrance most easily unto us, and most powerfully prevails to carry us into the broad way.

II. We shall consider the broad way joining the wide gate. Agreeable to what is said of the gate, the broad way joining it is the way of men's own heart; Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart:" Which heart being naturally a corrupt heart, is the way of irreligion and ungodliness, Psalm i. 1. As soon as men have entered the gate of the corrupt natural inclination, giving up themselves thereto, they are

on the broad way, the way of their own heart. And here I shall shew,

1*st*, That the way of one's own heart or natural inclination, is indeed the broad way.

2*dly*, What are the parts of this broad way leading to destruction.

3*dly*, Speak of the broadness of this way.

*First*, I shall shew that the way of one's own heart or natural inclination, is indeed the broad way. This appears,

1*st*, From that corrupt set or bent which the hearts of men have got by Adam's fall. Whatever vain men give out concerning the dignity of human nature, the testimony of God concerning the heart of man is quite otherwise; Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Our Saviour represents it as a poisoned fountain, Mark vii. 21, 22, and what poisoned it, was the fall of Adam, Rom. v. 12. The way then that it leads, must needs be the broad way to destruction, and therefore "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way," Isa. liii. 6. In that set,

1. There is a bending away from God, who originally was, and of right is our chief end, Psalm xiv. 3, Jer. ii. 13. The heart of man has not only left its rest in God, but is filled with natural enmity against him, Rom. viii. 7; has a dislike of his nature, which is holy, and of his law, which is a transcript of his holiness. There is a downright contrariety in his nature against the nature of God, and in his will against the will of God; Job. xxi. 14, "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

2. A bent towards the creature as the chief good, in the room of God, Jer. ii. 13. Hence the natural voice of the heart in man is, "Who will shew us any good?" Psalm iv. 6. For Adam falling from God, betook himself to the creature, to get out of it that satisfaction, which he was to have had from God; and in this case he left us; and naturally we go on that way, till powerfully turned to God again by grace.

3. An aversion to good, such as an untamed bullock has to the yoke, Jer. xxxi. 18. It is a pain to the natural man to admit the yoke of Christ; Hos. iv. 16, "Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer." So that a slavish fear of punishment, and a servile hope of reward, are the main things that can move them to duty; whereas, if the heart were left to its free choice, without these extrinsic motives, they would never yoke with it.

4. A proneness to evil; Hos. xi. 7, "My people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." The bias of the heart lies that way, so that it is the very first way the children of men go; Psalm lviii. 3,

"The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray, as soon as they be born, speaking lies." None need to teach them the way of sin; leave them to their choice, they will as naturally go that way, as water will go downward, or sparks of fire upward. Who then can doubt, but the way of the heart is the broad way?

2*dly*, This appears from the necessity of regeneration, which is absolute and universal; John iii. 3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Men must be made new creatures ere they can do good works, Eph. ii. 10; united to Christ by faith, ere they can do any thing to purpose; John xv. 5, "Without me ye can do nothing." This necessity springs from the total corruption of our nature, whereby it is indisposed to all good; John iii. 6, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." Whence it is evident, that the natural way of the heart is the broad way; for that which is wholly corrupt, cannot act but corruptly; and that nature which must be made new, ere it can do good, must needs, till it be renewed, be still going wrong.

3*dly*, *Lastly*, This appears from the difficulty there is in the conversion of sinners unto God; Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Great is that difficulty. Mercies will not do it, judgments will not; the sinner will trample on the goodness of God leading to repentance; he will go on in sin, though the fire of wrath is flashing on his face. A preacher from the dead would not convert a sinner; Luke xvi. 31. It is only the irresistible power of grace changing the heart that will do it; Jer. xxxi. 18. This speaks the natural way the heart goes to be the broad way, and no other.

*Secondly*, We shall consider "the parts of this broad way leading to destruction." It is so very broad, that we cannot enter into a detail of the particular parts thereof. But in the general there are two parts of it. 1. The way of vanity; and, 2. The way of vileness.

1*st*, The way of vanity; Eph. iv. 17. As soon as one has entered by that part of the wide gate of the natural inclination, opening toward the creature, away from God, he is upon the way of vanity, a broad, spacious way to destruction. He then begins a vain life, a course of vanity of conversation; 1 Pet. i. 18. And in this way most men, yea all, but regenerate men, are going. And it is,

1. A way that sets a man farther off from God. With the prodigal, he is then on his journey into the far country; Luke xv. 13. Every step in this way is a step farther away; and the older he grows in it, the relative distance betwixt God and him is increased.

God and the sinner part at the point of original corruption; and the sinner taking the way of vanity, is soon far from him.

2. A way wherein he applies himself close to the creature for his chief good; Jer. ii. 13. Having left God, he takes up with the empty creation, to hammer a happiness to himself out of creature-comforts; in imitation of fallen Adam embracing the forbidden fruit instead of a God. And here four things are to be considered,

(1.) The man is sensible of a want; Psalm iv. 6, "Who will shew us any good?" He is conscious to himself, that he is not self-sufficient. There is an empty space in his heart, which he must needs labour to have filled up. And it cannot be otherwise, since he has lost God, and is without him in the world; Eph. ii. 12; and that God is the only object capable of filling the heart, an infinite good only being commensurable to the boundless desires of the soul.

(2.) Having lost sight of God as man's happiness, he looks about through the creation for the supply of his want, for a match to his soul, which he finds cannot live alone by itself; Eeccl. vi. 9. Though the man has lost God, if he had not lost his eyes too, he would see there was no way for him, but to see to recover the enjoyment of God again. Bnt his eyes are darkened in this broad way, that he cannot see how God, and God only, can be a happiness to him; 1 Cor. ii. 14. The word of the gospel tells him this of God, and Christians tell it him from their experience; but he cannot comprehend it; therefore he looks about for it elsewhere.

(3) In this case the creature shews fair; the world appears in its beauty and gaudy dress. It displays its wealth at a distance, and looks out with all its charms, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" 1 John ii. 16. And the man is taken thinking if he had it he would be well. He looks on it as a fit match for his heart, and is not without hopes of gaining his point. And Satan is busy here to forward the project, representing the creature most speciously, and inflaming the sinner's desire after it. See Matth. iv. 8.

(4.) The sinner being taken, falls a-courting of the creature, for the enjoyment of the wanted happiness in it; Psalm iv. 6. Flushed with big hopes, he sets out on this project, and plies it closely. And this is the broad way of vanity, in which he travels endlessly, till either the grace of God open his eyes, and turn him back to God; or else that in hell he lift up his eyes, and see he has been ruined with courting all along a deceitful shadow.

This courting of the creature to be a match for the heart, is not slightly managed. But,

1. It is begun early; Psalm lviii. 3. As soon as ever the child-

ren of fallen Adam are sensible of a want, they go to that door for supply; while as yet there are no desires after God, they are gaping wide after the creature. Behold the little children, how fond of things grateful to the taste, and pleasant to the eye, while the compass of their understanding reaches no farther! What a mighty satisfaction do they promise themselves in these! And as they grow up, and the world opens out to them, and spreads its deceitful glories; how do their desires after it, and hunting for them, increase proportionally!

2. It is prosecuted assiduously, no time being lost for the thing purposed. The project is closely pursued, that if it prove successless, it is not through carelessness; Isa. lvii. 20; Psalm cxxvii. 2. They are early and late at the creature's door. Whatever disappointments they meet with, it makes no change of their mind, nor do they go to another airth for their happiness; Rom. vi. 20.

3. It is managed vigorously. They are not indifferent about their success, but in good earnest; their heart is wholly set on it. The most valuable talents they have, are laid out upon it; Isa. lv. 2. They take true pains upon it; they are not loiterers, but labour to gain their point; Isa. lv. 2; Matth. xi. 28, and that to weariness in the midst of difficulties; Hab. ii. 13. They are like hewers in stone, on the matter; Jer. ii. 13; and strike on rocks till the fire flash in their faces.

4. *Lastly*, It is continued all along, till the Lord from heaven put a stop to it; either in mercy, shewing them their error, and bringing them back unto God in Christ, to take up their rest in him; or else in wrath, taking them away from it by death, and so plucking up their hopes by the roots; Matth. xv. 45, 46; Luke xii. 20.

Now this way is the way of vanity, in that,

1. It is a false and deceitful way, Psalm cxix. 128, and can take with men only by means of darkness, blindness, and ignorance, ver. 104. In it shadows are proposed to the heart instead of a substance, the creature promising that which it is not able to perform; causing men to expect that out of it that is not in it. In it the bait appears; but the hook is hidden, which yet effectually ruins; 1 Tim. vi. 10. And in it men hunt their own sorrows and destruction.

2. It is an unprofitable way. In it a life is spent to no valuable purpose, and at the end it appears to have brought no lasting advantage; Rom. iii. 12. But thus men are running in the broad way, wearying themselves for a thing of nought; like children running in a sunny day catching butterflies, missing many of them, and the beautiful coloured wings of those they catch going to ashes between their fingers. It is unprofitable,

(1.) In that they quite fall short of the great end God proposeth to men, viz. his glory; Rom. iii. 23. Instead of living to his honour, they live to his dishonour, preferring the creature to the Creator, and putting it in his room as their chief good. And that must needs be a vain life, which does not reach the chief end it was given for. What then can be expected, but the doom of the unprofitable servant?

(2.) In that they quite fall short of the end they propose to themselves, viz., happiness, or a rest to their hearts; Hos. viii. 7. This is what all their days they seek, but never get in any of their days, nor at the end; nor is it possible to get it in that way; for it is the way of vanity. And is not that a vain life, where one must die disappointed of the great thing they mainly sought all their life?

3. It is a trifling way, in which one trifles away a lifetime, busy doing nothing, no substantial lasting good, nothing that will give comfort in a dying hour, nothing for the better world; Psalm xc. 9. God has sent us into this world, to do business for eternity, to pass trials for the happy world to come; but men going the broad way, forget their business, and trifle away time; it lies like lumber on their hand, and they are fain to go in quest of this and the other vanity, to get it driven off, as if they had nothing to do.

4. It is a restless way; Matth. xi. 28, 29. Solomon speaks of a vanity tossed to and fro; Prov. xxi. 6. Such is the whole life of one in the broad way. There is no rest for the heart in this way. Whatever amusements for a time they may get in it, they can never lay the heart to rest. Laying down the head upon one vanity to rest, the pillow is soon drawn away; or there is a thorn of uneasiness found in it, and they must shift themselves to another vanity, which quickly proves as unsatisfying as the other. So that they are like one on the top of a mast, they can get no rest.

5. *Lastly*, It is a way of endless wandering, through repeated disappointments. Here men are like the Sodomites about Lot's house, struck with blindness. They are going about for satisfaction, and groping for it every where, but can never find it; wearying themselves to find that door, but all in vain. But there is no end; but after a thousand disappointments a new vanity is tried, and the experiment made on another; Isa. lvii. 10. And so men are still going the round of vanities; till either grace is dropped into their hearts, turning them to rest in God; or else they drop into the grave, dying disappointed.

2*dly*, The broad way is the way of vileness; Psalm xiv. 1. As soon as one is entered by that part of the wide gate of the natural inclination opening towards sin, away from the holiness of God ex-

pressed in his law, he is upon the way of vileness leading straight to destruction; Tit. i. 15, 16; Rev. xxii. 15. And it is,

1. A way wherein men vile by nature soon grow more vile, and loathsome in God's sight, by going farther away from the holiness required in his law; Jer. ix. 3, "They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord." Here actual sin is heaped on original sin, a sinful life added to a sinful nature, and the natural corruption spreads itself in heart, lip, and life; so the farther they go in it, the farther from all good.

2. A way wherein they apply themselves to the satisfying instead of starving and mortifying their lusts; Psalm lviii. 3. Having no heart for the way of holiness, they set themselves to the way of sin, and pursue the same at the expense of the honour of God, and the wounding of their own consciences, till in end they land in the pit of destruction at the end of the way, if repenting not. And here four things may be considered,

1. The heart of man is naturally possessed with a fry of sinful corrupt lusts craving to be satisfied. See what proceeds out of the heart; Mark vii. 21, 22, "Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness." And if they were not in it, they would not come out of it. They are bred in the womb of the corruption of our nature; and by influence from hell they are soon brought to spread out themselves. These gape and open wide to be satisfied with what is agreeable to their nature.

2. The sinner, instead of starving them, sets himself to make provision for them, instead of denying them to gratify them; Psalm lxxviii. 18. And this is a hard task, the hardest that ever one took in hand; for it is like feeding of a fire, that never saith, It is enough. Lusts may be surfeited, but will never be satisfied. So it is a weary task the sinner has, Jer. ix. 5, and a laborious one, as in a close battle, James iv. 1—3.

3. The creature lying within the bounds of the law, cannot satisfy them; and no wonder, for it was never appointed to be satisfactory to us, so as to afford the rest of the heart. Even in paradise there was a want, which nothing but the enjoyment of God could fill up. The regular desires of a heart housed in God, and centering in him, the creature may satisfy in the regular use of it; but nothing regular will satisfy irregular lusts.

4. Wherefore the sinner breaks over the hedge unto that lying without the bounds of the holy law; and the satisfaction not found in allowed, it seeks in forbidden fruit, Prov. ix. 17. Thus the man wandering in the way of vanity, is every now and then turning to

the way of vileness; he is like the hungry beast on a bare pasture, that having ate up all within the hedge to the red earth, at length breaks over the hedge; as Dinah gadding abroad in the way of vanity, at length fell into a pit of vileness and defilement. And here two things present themselves for the entertainment of these vile lusts.

1. The desires of the flesh to be fulfilled; Eph. ii. 3. And here is a mire of vileness for the sinner to wallow in, in the broad way, called the filthiness of the flesh; 2 Cor. vii. 1. In it are to be seen drenched drunkards, gluttons, unclean persons, filthy speakers, and all sensualists, whose great business it is to gratify their senses, neglecting their souls; as if they were nothing but living flesh, or their souls only as salt to keep their bodies from corrupting.

2. The desires of the mind to be fulfilled; Eph. ii. 3. This mire is called the filthiness of the spirit; 2 Cor. vii. 1. Here are endless depths of enmity against God, rancour of spirit against and distaste of true holiness and purity, unbelief of the gospel, pride and selfishness, covetousness and earthly-mindedness, and innumerable evils more, in which sinners indulge themselves in the broad way.

These two issue in a fourfold road of the broad way, in each of which are many walking.

1. Black ignorance, wherein not a few rest satisfied without a tolerable knowledge of the foundations of religion; Psalm lxxxii. 5. They are taught to work, but not to read; if they were, either they forget it, or else they make no due use of it. The desires of the flesh and mind wholly take them up; and they neither have, nor desire to have the knowledge of God and his ways; Job xxi. 14. They know it would but hamper them in those things which take best with darkness, and cannot abide the light; John iii. 20, "For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." But alas! they consider not, that it will end in everlasting darkness; Hos. iv. 6; Isa. xxvii. 11.

2. Bare morality, lying in conformity to the letter of the ten commandments; whereby they keep some decency in civil society, but are utterly estranged from religion, and have not so much as an appearance of it. They are good neighbours, but no good Christians; deal fairly in things of this world, but have no dealing with things of the other world; mind their business and affairs of life, but quite forget the one thing needful. Their greatest excellency lies in negatives, like the Pharisee; Luke xviii. 11, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican;" as if they did not look on themselves obliged to

honour God, farther than not to affront him openly. This is a road of the broad way; Matth. v. 20, "For except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

3. A form of godliness wherein men go the outward round of the duties of religion, but still continue strangers to the life and power of it, 2 Tim. iii. 5. These are the whited sepulchres, men who tack a new life to the old heart; who sometimes have taken up from their extravagancies, but were never truly converted; who with their religion, such as it is, still retain the predominant love of sin; and always have some beloved lust, in the room of God in Christ. They are like those beasts, of which there is nothing good but the skin; and hence so many apostates, who turning their back on religion, and proving scandalous and profane in their lives, do but appear in their native colours, and what they always were, before they cast off their mask. Let such consider these scriptures; Psalm cxxv. 5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." Matth. xxiv. 51, "The Lord shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

4. Open profanity; wherein men bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, giving themselves the loose in the open course of scandalous enormities, Gal. v. 19—21. These are they that "declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not" who take pleasure in making themselves vile; scorn to be hampered with the rules of religion, sobriety, and decency; who make a mock of sin, and are going to destruction jovially, as with tabret and pipe. This surely is the broad road in the broad way; and they cannot be thought to be deceiving themselves with hopes of heaven, for they cannot think it a place for dogs and swine. If they do, they will be disappointed; Rev. xxii. 15, "For without are dogs." &c. A profane life will make a miserable end; Eph. v. 6, "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Now this is the way of vileness, wherein men render themselves loathsome in the sight of God; their souls in this way still gathering more defilement to them, and all the defilement sticking, none carried off, while they are upon it. Every sin leaves a blot on the soul whereby it is laid under pollution agreeable to its nature. Thereby,

1. The soul is rendered unlike God; and the more sinful, the more unlike him in his moral perfections. Now, God cannot but

love himself, and his own purity; and therefore he cannot but hate and loathe what is made unlike him, and contrary to him.

2. The soul being made unlike God, its beauty is marred, and it becomes loathesome. Holiness is the glory or beauty of God; Exod. xv. 11, "Who is a God like unto thee, glorious in holiness?" and God being the supreme pattern of all perfection, holiness must also be the beauty of the creature; and consequently sin must be the deformity of the soul.

*Thirdly*, We shall consider the broadness of this way; which we may take up in these two things.

1. There is large room in it for passengers to walk in. The vain and vile mind is an unfathomable depth; and the way to destruction is of an unmeasurable breadth. So the mind has room to wander up and down, and to range to and fro in the broad way. Endless vanities present themselves there, innumerable vilenesses are to be found there, according to Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" so that he who has disrelished one, may betake himself to another; and every lust of the heart may find wherewith to gratify it there.

2. There is no hampering with hedges in it. It is the way of lawless liberty; the very nature of it is to lay aside all restraints, and to allow all licentiousness. In that way the bands are broken asunder, and the cords cast away from the travellers. Bible-rules, dictates of conscience, and suggestions of the Spirit of holiness, are laid aside in that way, as things that would narrow it. Hence,

1. It is easy to fall on it. It is such a broad way, that there is no difficulty to hit it, Psalm lviii. 3. Though one shut his eyes, and walk at all adventures, he will not miss it; because it is the way of natural inclination; so all the difficulty is to keep off it.

2. It is easy walking in it. There is full room there for all the sinner's vain and vile inclinations. They go with the wind while they are on it; they row with the stream; for the natural bent lies that way, Jer. iv. 22. They have no more ado but follow it.

3. It is not easy to get off it; Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Many seem to themselves and others for a time to leave it; and yet they do not change their way, but only their road; going off from one road of the broad way to another, as from profanity to formality.

III. We shall consider this way in its leading away to destruction.

Here we shall,

1*st*, Shew the import of it.

2*dly*, Confirm it,

*First.* We shall shew the import of this. It imports, that,

1. Destruction is at the end of this way, however the travellers notice it not; Prov. ix. 17, 18, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell." As sure as heaven's happiness is at the end of the narrow way, hell and destruction are at the end of the broad way. There is no separating what God has thus joined.

2. The farther one goes in that way, the further away he is from safety, and the nearer to destruction. Progress in the broad way carries one still farther from God, from holiness, and from salvation; Psal. cxix. 155, "Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes." They are far from the God of salvation, the way of salvation, and so from salvation itself; and still they draw nearer to destruction.

3. Holding on the way, they cannot miss of destruction; Rom. iii. 16, 17, "Destruction and misery are in their ways." They will land at length in the place of destruction. Psal. ix. 17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." They will find themselves in the state of destruction, Matth. xxv. 46. A destruction of their well-being, not of their being; for they will not be substantially destroyed, or annihilated, to make an end of their being; but destroyed as to their comfort and ease, or tormented, to make an end of their well-being. What is destroyed, is not therefore annihilated, Luke iv. 34; compared with Matth. viii. 29. Annihilation properly is momentary, their destruction will be everlasting, 2 Thess. i. 9; annihilation brings into a state of negative rest, but they will have no rest, Rev. xiv. 11; but be tormented for ever and ever; chap. xx. 10, "Their worm that dieth not," must have a subject to live in; and the fire is not everlasting, but for everlasting punishment, Matth. xxv. 41, 46.

*Secondly*, To confirm that this way leads to destruction, consider,

1. This is the constant voice of the word. God himself at the beginning spoke it first of all; Gen. ii. 17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The text is Jesus Christ's declaration of it. It was the common and constant voice of all the prophets and apostles, to be found in almost every leaf of the Bible. Thus the truth of God insures it; and if men will promise themselves peace in it over the belly of all this, what help is there for it? But they will be miserably disappointed; Deut. xxix. 19, 20, "The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."

2. The rectoral justice of God demands it, Gen. xviii. 25; compared with 2 Thess. i. 6, "He that ruleth among men must be just;" and therefore must punish crimes, as well as reward good services; and must not the ruler and judge of the world do justice too? Yea, his own honour, and the good of mankind, require it; and it is the intimation of that justice that keeps some decency in the world. We see very well, that some men have a sunshine of peace in the broad way, while others have much adversity in the narrow way. There must then be a judgment for punishment at the end of the broad way. And some sinners are punished now in their way, as an earnest of it; but all are not, for assuring it.

3. The nature of things, duly considered, manifests it. The soul of man is immortal, and dropping the body, still lives. God alone can be our happiness, as being alone commensurable to the boundless desires of our souls. Now the broad way leads away from God, consequently away from happiness; and the future state being not a state of trial, but of recompence, the separation from God there must be total and final, and consequently the misery of the rational creature complete. What can be the end of the way of vanity, but absolute disappointment, cutting and galling of the soul; how can that disappointment be evited, when men pass away out of this world, and this world shall perish, and so they can never have more of what they sought their satisfaction in? What can be the end of the way of vileness but destruction, while nothing of their vile ways remains with them, but the lust after them, the cutting remembrance of them, without any possibility of gratifying their lusts more?

4. *Lastly*, The voice of the natural conscience confirms it; Rom. i. 32; and ii. 15. There is something within the sinner that forebodes destruction to him in this way; though through the violence of lusts it prevails not, or is not heeded; Job xv. 21. It is their consciousness of this that makes them always in a hurry, and to stave off serious communing with themselves; for if they would descend into themselves, and give the broad and narrow way a fair hearing, they would find conscience within them frighting from the former, and pressing to the latter.

Use 1. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. That the way of one's setting out in the world is a matter of vast consequence. It is of great weight how one begins his course of life. If it is begun well, it will readily end well; if the beginning be ill, the end will be conform, if there is not a sound change made. Ye see there is a wide gate to enter by, and it sets on a broad way leading to destruction. What need then is there to enter

right, since if we enter wrong, we cannot proceed right till we enter again by a new gate? This calls aloud to,

(1.) The young to look well at what gate they enter, how they begin their course, and set off in the world; Eccl. xii. 1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." This for the most part is little considered; but the young go forward at random, thinking it of little moment how their first years be spent, hoping their riper years may be spent regularly. This is to enter the wide gate, leaving your soul in pawn, that ye may come back again, and will not go forward. But one step makes way for another, and the return for the most part is forgot, and the pawn lost.

(2.) The aged to review their entering; and now that they are far on in their way, to consider what gate they entered by. It is impossible ye can be on the right way, whatever your way is, if ye entered not by the right gate. Maybe your way now is not quite so dirty as your entrance was; ye have perhaps left the follies of an ill-spent youth, and taken up yourselves; but ye may have done all that, and yet be on the broad way. Is there a sound work of conversion in your case? Are ye become new creatures? 2 Cor. v. 17. If not, ye are still in the old way.

2. That giving scope to the natural inclination of the heart, sets one surely on the broad way to destruction. For that inclination is the wide gate, which the broad way joins, the former issuing in the latter. People generally think little of the opening of their hearts towards the creature, and towards sin; but if there is not a struggle begun against both, but way given to any of them, the party is entered by the wide gate, and is on the broad way. Our worst enemy is within: and that heart will ruin a man, that is not struggled against, but yielded to, and carries a man in its way. The pliableness that way is frowardness against God; Isa. lvii. 17.

3. *Lastly*, The way and course of life that is most grateful and easiest to our corrupt nature, is most dangerous; it is the way to destruction. Nature likes not to be hampered, but to go at liberty, ranging the treasures of vanity, and wallowing in the mires of vileness. But that present ease is a pledge of future destruction; that lawless liberty betrays one into eternal confinement; that casting off of the bands of duty, prepares one for the bands of wrath in the end.

Use 2. Of Exhortation. And,

1*st*, Consider your way, what way ye are on, whether on the broad way or not; Hag. i. 5, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways." Should one cry to you, that about the place where ye are going there is a way that is deadly dangerous, ye would certainly

look to your feet, to see that ye were not on it. Here is a voice from heaven telling you, that in this world where ye are, there is a way leading to destruction; O then, be not secure, but consider seriously what way ye are on, whether on it or not. Lay then this matter to heart, examine your state and way, and put this question to yourselves, What way am I on?

Motive 1. This is a piece of duty ye owe to God, in return of all the calls of heaven to you by ordinances and providences; Mic. vi. 9; Rev. iii. 20. Sometimes he speaks to you by his word, sometimes by providences; will ye not give him a hearing, standing and considering what way ye are on, and whither it leads? It is dangerous to give a deaf ear to all; Prov. i. 24.

Motive 2. It is a piece of justice ye owe to your own souls, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Were a man driving a parcel of beasts, and one should tell him, There is a way thereabouts that ends in a precipice, he would certainly consider whether he were on it or not. But it is sounded again and again in men's ears, that there is a broad way that leads to destruction; yet they will not do their souls the justice once seriously to consider whether they were on it or not, but just drive forward at all adventures.

Motive 3. As is the way ye are on, so will the end be. Death and life hang on the way ye are on. If ye are on the broad way, ye are on the way of death and destruction; if not, ye are on the way of life, and is not that worth your considering the matter?

Motive 4. *Lastly*, It would be of great use to have that point cleared. Should ye find yourselves not on the broad way, ye might have the comfort of it, that ye are in the way to life, and shall certainly get thither. If ye were convinced of your being in the broad way ye might get off from it yet, and so escape being ruined by it. Some need be at no great pains to find out this, if they would but consider things calmly and impartially. But I shall drop these few things about it.

1. Those that never saw themselves on the broad way, and destruction awaiting them at the end of it, are certainly upon it, by that token that they are going on their way blindfolded, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Unconvinced sinners are surely unconverted; for who will ever go right that once are wrong, till they see themselves wrong?

2. They that have not entered by the strait gate of conversion and regeneration, but have climbed up another way to the way they are in, Matth. xviii. 3; John iii. 3. They who, whatever changes have been made in their head, in point of light to discern the truth; in their affections, in point of relish of it; and in their life, in point of escaping the pollutions of the world; yet their nature has never

been changed, never got the new heart impressed with inclination towards the whole law, and reconciled to the whole yoke of Christ, but the predominant love of sin still remains in them, are certainly on the broad way.

3. They that have a reigning disgust at the narrow way, whether in themselves or others, Rom. viii. 7. There is a generation that choose such a measure of religion for themselves, but they can have no more of it, they cannot think to be bound up to all the rules of it; they hate it in others, and cannot admit it in themselves. These are in the broad way, by this token, that all the saints aspire to a perfection of holiness, and love it, Phil. iii. 13, 14.

4. *Lastly*, They whose choice is a loose and licentious way, in the way of vanity or vileness, and can find no pleasure but in such a way, Rom. viii. 5. This argues a temper of spirit wholly carnal, and estranged from the life of God; that cannot favour the things of God, but of the flesh; and that is a deadly condition, Rom. viii. 5, 6. To such heaven, as a holy place, would be a prison, a place wherein they could have no pleasure, and they may be sure they shall never be brought thither; since they are not by heavenly dispositions made meet for it, Col. i. 12, 13.

2*dly*, Ye that are brought off the other way, be suitably affected with, and walk worthy of the deliverance, as being brought off the way of destruction. And,

1. Be thankful to God for it, who by his grace drew you off from it, Psalm cvii. 20, 21. Look back to the precipice that ye were once carelessly standing on, to the way of destruction that ye were securely going forward in; bless him that opened your eyes to see your danger there, and to see another way safe, however narrow; that by his grace determined you to forsake the broad way, and choose the narrow; and by the power of his Spirit drew you off the one, and set you on the other.

2. Entertain no hankering after that way again; beware of giving rueful looks back to it. It is an exhortation given to those espoused to Christ; Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." And it is not given in vain; for in the best there is an old man remaining corruption, which perceiving the free and unhampered gate of the carnal world in the way of vanity and vileness, is apt to envy them in a sort, and secretly to wish they had the same scope with them; Prov. xxiii. 17, "Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." This is most dangerous, which, if not timely suppressed, will inflame the whole soul, and lay it in ruins; Numb. xi. 4—6, 33, 34, therefore "remember Lot's wife," Luke xvii. 32.

3. Do not grudge your difficulties and hardships in the narrow way; 1 Pet. iv. 12; James i. 2—4. In it you meet with correction, but in the other ye would have met with destruction; and there is no more reason to grudge, than one brought off a way where he would have broke his neck, has no grudge to breaking his toes on the safe way that he is brought on. The hardships of the broad and narrow way differ as much as the curse and the cross, as the killing sword and the surgeon's lance, as eternal wrath and God's fatherly rod.

4. *Lastly*, Pity them that are on the broad way, and be concerned for their recovery. Pity them; for alas! they know not what they do, where they are, the deadly danger they are in. Be concerned for them; for they are going to destruction and are not aware of it; Prov. vii. 22, 23, and ix. 17, 18. How can ye miss to be so affected towards them, if ye are sensible what once was your own case; Tit. iii. 3, "For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

3*dly*, Sinners on the broad way turn off from it as the way of destruction. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Motive 1. There is no escaping of destruction continuing on it, whatever ye may imagine; 1 Thess. v. 3. God has said it; how can ye hope for safety in that way, over the belly of an express declaration from heaven? He is infinite in knowledge, ye cannot outwit him; in power, and ye cannot outbrave him; he is essentially true, and ye will not be able to make him a liar; Numb. xxiii. 19. See Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

Motive 2. It will be a total destruction it will bring you to; 2 Pet. ii. 12, 13. A destruction of your souls, bodies, and comforts; Prov. vi. 32, and viii. 36; Isaiah lxvi. 24; Luke xvi. 24. Look as it was with Sodom when it was utterly overthrown, there was nothing left, but they and all theirs were destroyed; so will the end of the broad way be to you.

Motive 3. It will be an eternal destruction; 2 Thess. i. 9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." A destruction not of your being indeed, but of your well-being; ever dying, but never dying out; Matth. xxv. 46; Rev. xiv. 11; and xx. 10. Your way may be long indeed, but the destruction at the end of it will be longer; ye will compass your way at most in a few years; but the destruction will never end, but go on through eternity.

Motive 4. Ye may get off it now, and so escape destruction in it;

Ezek. xviii. 30. Satan and an evil world may persuade you to go on in it, but they cannot force you thereto. There is no necessary connection betwixt your having gone in it hitherto, and your going on in it still. It is a course that may be broken off; the grace of Christ is able to bring you off it; and if ye be truly willing, will bring you off it; Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

Motive 5. God is calling you to turn from it and leave it; Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Christ has opened to you another way, a way of life, and is inviting you earnestly into it. He is proposing himself as the way; John xiv. 6, and calling you to him; Matth. xi. 28. This his voice sounds in the way, and reaches your ears while ye are on it, the broad way; Prov. ix. 5, 6. But it is not to be heard at the end of the way. Therefore it is said, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice." At the end of the way the voice of the Lamb of God ceases as such, and becomes the roaring of the Lion of the tribe of Judah; Luke xix. 27.

Motive 6. *Lastly*, The calls you have to turn from it will be an aggravation of your destruction if ye go on; Matth. xi. 22. The remembrance of them at the end will be cutting and galling, when there will be no remedy. It will be the never-dying worm that will gnaw for ever; to think, that, for the pleasure of walking at your liberty in the broad way for a few years, ye brought yourselves to be shut up in the pit of destruction for ever. Therefore (Heb. xii. 25), "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven;" lest (Prov. v. 11, 12) "thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?"

Now, if ye would change your way, and leave the wide gate,

1. Be peremptory in it, and resolute for it; for ye will not want opposition. Satan will oppose the change violently by his temptations; the carnal world will oppose it; your former licentious companions will be sure to counsel, and mock you from it if they can; and your own lusts within will be an active party against it. But remember (Matth. xi. 12) "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

2. Do not delay it, but turn immediately, as the psalmist did; Psalm cxix. 60, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." If your resolutions for it be sincere, they will not admit of a moment's delay, more than the casting of a burning coal out of your bosom. If ye delay till the next day or the next hour, ye may be at the end of your way before that time; and what avails

your purpose of turning then? As when the cry of fire in a house is made, men go immediately to quench it, knowing that every minute the fire is proceeding and gaining ground; so when men are convinced in earnest, they will forthwith set to turn.

3. Set yourself by all means for the strait gate, and do not think of getting over into the narrow way at the broad side; Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." This is a fundamental mistake in the conduct of many; whereby, leaving the way of looseness and carelessness, they commence mere moralists or legal formalists, but no more true Christians than they were before. Satisfy not yourselves without a deep conviction of your sin and misery, faith in Jesus uniting you to him, true repentance and conversion unto God by Christ.

4. *Lastly*, Be not frightened at, discouraged by, or made to turn back because of the straitness of the gate; but peremptorily enter, and resolutely thrust forward, till ye be quite through on the narrow way of holiness; Luke xiii. 24, forecited.

Doctrine III. The wide gate, with the broad way joining it, does so take with mankind, that the multitude of the world goes in by it, at all adventures.

In discoursing this subject, I shall,

I. Explain the point.

II. Confirm this sad truth, That the multitude of the world go in by the wide gate into the broad way.

III. Shew how it comes to pass, that the multitude take the broad way, notwithstanding of the destruction at the end of it.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. We shall explain this point. And we may take up the sense and import of it in these four things, all of them the genuine import of the text.

*First*, There is among mankind a going in at the wide gate. However dangerous it is, yet it is frequented by poor unthinking souls. Though of right it should be loathed for the pollution of it, and should be shunned with a horror of it for the danger thereof, yet men do go in at it. That is,

1*st*, They enter and pass through the wide gate, giving way to the corrupt natural inclination of their hearts, when they begin their course of life in the world, Psalm lviii. 3. This, according to what was said, lies in two things.

1. Giving way and scope to the bias of their heart towards the creature, away from God. The children of fallen Adam naturally

go away from God, when they begin their course, Psalm xiv. 2, 3; and they go to the creature in his room and stead, Jer. ii. 13. They find they want, they need, and cannot but desire to have supply; they want a rest to their hearts, a match for their souls, something that may satisfy their desires. But what door go they to for the supply of their want? Not to God's, but to the creature's, Psalm iv. 6, John v. 40. There they fasten on the dry breasts, refusing the Lord's offers, Isa. lv. 1, 2.

2. Giving way to the bias of the heart towards sin, away from the holiness required by the law. God in Christ calls them to take on his yoke, Matth. ix. 29, but they cannot submit their necks to it, Rom. viii. 7. They choose sinful liberty, and look asquint on the way of God's commandments. Beginning their course in the world, and sinful liberty and religious strictness being both before them, they reject the latter, and readily embrace the former. Sin appears delightful and pleasant, holiness rugged and unsightly to them; so they go with the bent sail of their hearts towards sin, hoping to find there what will satisfy.

2*dly*, Passing through the wide gate, they are set on the broad way; they go in thereat, viz., into the broad way, which the wide gate is the entry to, and so they go on,

1. Walking in the way of vanity, Eph. iv. 17. They spend their lifetime in a vain pursuit of happiness in the creature, which all along disappoints them, and in the end worst of all; Jer. ii. 5, "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" They weary themselves in the pursuit, and in end obtain nothing that can satisfy, Hab. ii. 13. Their whole life is filled up with mere amusements; and beyond this they reach not to any solid and lasting happiness, which can only be had in the enjoyment of a God in Christ, Luke xvii. 28, 29.

2. Walking in the way of vileness, Eph. ii. 3. The creature within the hedge of the divine law not affording the desired satisfaction, they break over the hedge, and range up and down among forbidden profits and pleasures, if so be that stolen waters may make up to them what is wanting in allowed ones. And none of these answering expectation neither, they go from one act of vileness to another; and the disappointment still renewed, their lusts crave anew of them, and they seek afresh to satisfy them. Thus their life is spent, till their way is at an end, and in the end they fall into destruction. This is the going in thereat.

*Secondly*, They go in thereat at all adventures, rashly and heedlessly, without considering. Great is the danger of that way, de-

struction being at the end of it. They are told their danger; conscience tells them of it; they are warned of it from the word; providence sets many frightful examples before them, one being made example to another, but all in vain. Their vain minds and corrupt lusts hurry them forward; they fix their eyes on the bait that is pleasing, but notice not the ruining hook; and so they go on at all adventures, whatever be the issue.

*Thirdly*, They are many that thus go in at the wide gate into the broad way. As destructive as it is, there is a multitude of the children of men on it. Whoever mind for it, they need not fear want of company of fellow-travellers therein. They are many,

1. Absolutely. There is never wanting on the broad way a number of travellers, to encourage one another. There is a multitude to do evil. There they are of all ranks and qualities, great and small, of all professions, ages, and sexes.

2. Comparatively, in comparison of those on the narrow way. So saith the text. There is such an odds between the two parties, that the broad way-men make the many, the other but a few. If the broad way of sinful liberty, and the strait way of religion and godliness, were put to the vote in the world, the former would undoubtedly carry it; those for it being so far superior in number to those for the other.

*Fourthly*, The wideness of the gate and broadness of the way influenceth this. The agreeableness thereof to the corrupt minds of men, inviteth powerfully to enter and come on; and being entered and come on, it keeps them from going back, and prompts to go on. It is a powerful influence, which the destruction at the end of the way is not able to balance.

II. We shall confirm this sad truth, That the multitude of the world go in by the wide gate into the broad way. This may appear from,

1*st*, Scripture testimony, which is the testimony of God himself, who neither can deceive, nor be deceived. Scripture light all along discovers the multitude of the world to be on the broad way. This it doth several ways; and particularly,

1. Witnessing the universal corruption of human nature; Psalm xiv. 2, 3, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doth good, no not one." If ye think this was meant only of those in the Psalmist's day, ye may be cured of that mistake, by the apostle's application of it to all the world; "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there

is none that doth good, no not one. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." This speaks it to be natural to man to betake himself to the broad way, though not primitively natural; for, Eccles. vii. 29, "God made man upright;" yet secondarily, and accidentally, as our nature was corrupted in Adam, John iii. 6, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." Job xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." So that this is the first way all men go, and in which they hold on till turned by grace.

2. Witnessing the general depravity of men's lives. How forcible is that testimony; 1 John v. 19, "The whole world lieth in wickedness?" The godly are such a small number in the world, that the name of the world is left to the corrupt part; and they are so very corrupt, that they are said to lie in wickedness. The straying in the broad way begins very early; Psalm lviii. 3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies;" and God's elect ones are once engaged therein as well as others; Isa. liii. 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray;" and go on till returned unto Jesus Christ; 1 Pet. ii. 25, "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the shepherd and Bishop of your souls." But still the multitude strays on, Phil. ii. 21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

3. The constant call to the multitude to repent and turn. That call supposes them to be quite wrong, and out of the way; Matth. ix. 13, "I am come to call sinners to repentance." It was the sound the prophets and apostles made in the world, each of them in their time, where they executed the commission. So the house of Israel is bespoken; Ezek. xxxiii. 11, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" So saith the apostle; Acts xvii. 30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." And in all ages the necessity of this call to repent does continue, there being but few who answer it.

4. *Lastly*, The sweeping judgments a holy God has at times sent on the world, were sure tokens of the multitude being on the broad way. Once the whole inhabitants of the earth, save eight persons, were destroyed by a deluge of water. Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed with fire from heaven, only Lot and his family escaping; whereas God was ready to have spared the whole, if there had been

but ten righteous ones in the place. The destruction of Jerusalem was another dispensation of that kind, of which our Saviour saith, Matth. xxiv. 21, 22, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." And the burning up of the world with fire at last, is a speaking evidence that still the multitude will take the broad way.

2*dly*, From our own observation, if we will but take a view of the world, as we have access to be acquainted with it by seeing and hearing. I shall not speak of the many nations lying in Pagan idolatry, nor others without the verge of the visible church. It is plain, that among those that have the light of the gospel shining among them, the multitude is on the broad way.

1. Every body may see, how quite unlike to the rules of the gospel are the lives of the generality that hear it; Tit. ii. 11, 12. Sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, are taught by it; but few learn the lessons. What excess of passions and vanity of mind carry most men beyond all bounds of sobriety, to their own hurt? What unrighteousness prevails to the injuring of others, so that in every society, greater and lesser, there are heavy complaints of this kind? And how little regard to God, his honour, his law, and interests, is to be seen among men, to the provoking of the eyes of his glory? If the multitude is not on the broad way, how is it thus? Truly, if ye see not that the multitude is upon it, it is an evidence ye do not know it by that name, and are unacquainted with the narrow way.

2. They that have eyes to see may see, how rare experimental religion is in the world. The multitude trouble not their heads about it; but live at ease, without any saving acquaintance with Christ, ignorant of the life of faith, and struggle against the body of sin and death. Conviction of one's lost state by nature is very rare; the work of conversion is yet more rare. Few have a profession or appearance of religion; and among those that have it, how many are utter strangers to the power of godliness? The truly serious will be convinced of this; for they must be ready to take up Micah's lamentation; Mic. vii. 1, 2, &c. See it.

III. How comes it to pass, that the multitude take the broad way, notwithstanding of the destruction at the end of it? This may be accounted for, if we consider these following things:—

1. It is the most agreeable way to their corrupt nature. It is the very way of their heart; Isa. lvii. 17. The heart of man naturally is a treasure of vanity, a fountain of vileness; Jer. xvii. 9; Mark

vii. 21. How can the broad way of vanity and vileness miss to be agreeable to it? Likeness begets love and liking; so their souls natively choose the broad way, wherein are to be found what things promise, though deceitfully, satisfaction to the vanity of their minds, and the corrupt lusts of their hearts.

2. The blindness of their minds; Eph. iv. 17, 18. They see not the danger, to fright them from it; they cannot, they will not see it. Their unmortified lusts cast up such mists as darken the eyes of their mind; that though the danger is told them a thousand times, they cannot perceive it; Prov. ix. 17, 18, will not believe it; Deut. xxix. 19, 20, they see not any of those things that might draw them from off it; 1 Cor. ii. 14. There is an attractive virtue, beauty, and glory in the contrary way, Prov. iii. 17, but they do not perceive it.

3. Prejudices against the narrow way. They not only have not a good opinion of it; but they have an ill opinion of it, are prejudiced against it; Acts xxviii. 22. It appears to them an overgrown, rough, and frightful path; which, if they consult their interest, they must hold off from. Christ's yoke is taken for an uneasy yoke, his burden for a very heavy one. And so they determine against it, without giving it a fair trial.

4. The broad way is really easier for the time; "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." In it one has no more ado, but to follow the inclination of his own heart; but to go with the wind of corrupt passions and affections; but in the narrow way he will have that wind in his face, and must keep up a struggle against his lusts, to mortify them. Thus present ease engages them to that way that ends in destruction, and present difficulty frightens them from the way that leads to life in the end.

5. Satan, the enemy of their salvation, has a mighty influence on them to carry them to, and keep them on that way. He is "the god of this world;" 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, and men are naturally under his power; Acts xxvi. 18. He has a favourable party within them; so that the way he would have them go, is the way their natural bent lies. Hence he has easy work to prompt them forward, for he rows with the tide. Add to this his subtilty, whereby he can easily overreach them; and his diligence, whereby he slips no occasion to put them on; and no wonder he drives the multitude before him.

6. Example contributes exceedingly to it; Matth. xviii. 7. One goes into that way, another follows, and so on. It is true, there are examples on the other side too; but good example has not such influence as bad; because men are naturally corrupt, and therefore want but one to go before, that they may follow according to their

natural inclination, like water going down a hill, where the passage is cleared. But it is against the grain to follow good example.

7. *Lastly*, Want of consideration; Luke xv. 17. Few are at pains to weigh things, and deliberately to choose their way; but they take the broad way upon trust, as that which first offers to them. They look not afar off, beyond the present time; they consider not what the end will be, but embrace the fair appearance for the present before them. They are engaged in the broad way ere they are aware; "for childhood and youth are vanity;" Eccl. xi. 10. Youth is headstrong; and men are hurried on with strong and impetuous passions, till they have got a set they cannot throw off; Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Use 1. Of Information. Hence we may learn, that,

1. Prevailing sloth, and love to carnal ease, makes terrible havock in the world. These are they that make the wide gate and broad way so taking, that the multitude go in thereat; and consequently this betrays them into utter ruin; Prov. vi. 9—11. Sloth so prevails, that they cannot think to abide a stress, no not for things of the greatest weight; but what is easiest, and requires least pains, that is accounted best; and they cannot be moved with the after-reckoning.

2. The broad way that leads to destruction, is the throngest way in the world. Some take another way indeed, but the multitude is on the broad way. Many are the civil and religious differences among men; but here the multitude meet altogether upon one way, notwithstanding all their differences. There are different roads in this way, for the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the professor and the profane; but their way is one, and leads to the same place, where these differences will subsist no more; Psalm cxxv. 5; Matth. xxiv. 51. At present they join to make up the multitude in the broad way.

3. What a poor defence of one's way and manner of life is it, That it is the way that generally prevails, that the most part follow? Alas! is not the multitude on the broad way? But will that make it a way for our imitation? The apostle, describing the walk of the Ephesians when they were dead in sins, tells us, it was "according to the course of the world;" Eph. ii. 2. And he urges the Romans not to "conform to it;" Rom. xii. 2. That way is to be suspected that is the most taking with the multitude.

4. What it is that keeps sin and iniquity in countenance in the world. It is the multitude of its followers; 1 Pet. iv. 4. Sin has a baseness or filthiness about it, which is a spring of shame; yet men

will refuse to be ashamed of their vile and corrupt courses; Jer. viii. 12; and some will pride themselves in them, glorying in their shame Why? The multitude stamp these courses with their authority; and so they may appear with open face; for blackness is no reproach among blackmoors. But Christ appearing in the glory of his Father, and all the holy angels, with him, in the end, will sink the glory of the authority of the multitude; then shame will cover them; Dan. xii. 2.

5. No wonder the serious godly have a lonely, uncomfortable, and despised life in the world. Israel was a type of them in that case; Numb. xxiii. 9, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Micah laments his lonely case, because of the multitude being on the broad way; Micah vii. 1, &c.; he could have few to take part with him, few to unbosom himself to. Hence God's people are the world's wonder; Zech. iii. 8; Psalm lxxi. 7. They are despised as an humoursome, odd, fantastic kind of people, addicted to singularities; because the multitude is on another way they dare not take.

6. The church's peace and prosperity in the world cannot be long lasting; for the corrupt party in the world bears the sway, the multitude being on the broad way; Cant. ii. 2. So "the silence in heaven is but for half an hour," Rev. viii. 1; the corrupt multitude soon fill all with confusion again. Hence,

(1.) Her peace has ofttimes been broken with persecution, the prevailing multitude crying "Crucify him, crucify him." The multitude then like swelling waters go over the head, and threaten to swallow her up, to raze Jerusalem to the very foundations. And had not the Lord been on her side, they had destroyed her quite and clean long ere now.

(2.) Her peace restored, her purity is removed; Cant. i. 6. The multitude on the broad way deface her glory and beauty, and she is made to "lie among the pots;" for a corrupt multitude will still do corruptly, and like the mixed multitude infect all societies, till the infection spread, and the corruption become universal.

We see it is our case this day. Time was when persecution, blood, and violence rode in triumph; and nothing was heard from the multitude in church and state, but crucify, raze, &c. Now that humour is changed, and the persecutors as well as the persecuted are despised; but there is a general corruption in principles and practice, whereby truth and holiness are wounded in the vitals; a hundred times more dangerous to the church than the persecution was.

Use 2. Of exhortation. As ever ye would escape destruction in

the end, do not go the way of the multitude, the way the most go. And,

1. Believe it, that the multitude is on the broad way to destruction. Believe it, since Christ has said it. Open your eyes, and ye may see it. Ye have the more need to be fixed in this principle, that we are naturally prejudiced in favour of a multitude, and to think, that the truth and goodness of a cause must needs be on the side of the many. And if that obtain with us in this case, we will be ready to embark, and go down the stream with them.

2. Never think to shelter yourselves in an ill way, among the throng of them that are on it. The throng there may blind you as to the destruction at the end of the way, but can never afford you protection. If the whole world were on the broad way, they could not alter the nature of it, and make that which is evil and destructive, good and safe.

3. In your course of life, follow not the multitude of the world, but distinguish yourselves from them, though ye should undergo the censure of being singular; Exod. xxiii. 2; Rom. xii. 2. Make not the many in the world your pattern; but choose that way which the best, not which the most are on.

Motive 1. Consider the way of the multitude is the way to destruction, as is clear from the text; and however people may please themselves with companions in sin, it will be no comfort to go to hell with company, as may be learned from Luke xvi. 28. Why should regard to a multitude prevail with us, to go to destruction with them?

Motive 2. There will be no getting to heaven without striving against the stream of the multitude of the world; Eph. vi. 12. God calls you to come out from among them, 2 Cor. vi. 17; to forget your people, Psalm xlv. 10; yea, to save yourselves from them, as from a company of destroyers, Acts ii. 40. Ye must fight your way through them, if ever ye would receive the crown; resolute not to go along with them, cost what it will; as our Lord teacheth; Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Motive 3. This was the way the cloud of witnesses went before us, refusing the way of the multitude. Thus did Noah in the old world; and thus did Abraham, Moses, and all the prophets. Thus our Saviour himself had the multitude against him, he and they walking in a way and manner of life quite opposite; and so all his apostles. Can we think to travel with the multitude, and lodge with the saints in the end?

Motive 4. What is a multitude against God? Job ix. 4. Is it reasonable that the authority of men should take place against the authority of God? All men are liars; God neither can deceive, nor be deceived. Why then should not his word be our rule to be stuck to in all things that it requires or forbids, say the contrary who will? Can a multitude secure you from the punishment of sinful ways? No; they cannot secure themselves; Psalm ix. 17.

Motive 5. *Lastly*, To follow the multitude, is to strengthen the conspiracy against God. And how will ye answer it to him, that when ye saw the stream going against him, his work, and his way, in the world, ye went along with it, and so added to the force of it? In such a case, he is saying, "Who is on my side? Will ye also go away?" It concerns all to see what they will answer to this.

Advice. Let not the scarecrow of singularity frighten you into the way of the multitude. Noah was a very singular man in the old world, and Lot in Sodom; and had they not been so, they had perished with the rest. None will see heaven, but a singular kind of folk; Mark viii. 38.

Doctrine IV. It is a strait gate and a narrow way that leadeth unto life.

In speaking to this, we will consider,

I. The strait gate.

II. The narrow way leading away unto life.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. We shall consider the strait gate. And having spoken of this already, I shall here drop but a few things of it,

1*st*, The strait gate is the entrance, and the only entrance into the narrow way that leadeth unto life. This speaks four things.

1. That mankind naturally are off the way to life; Rom. iii. 12. And if they hold on the way they begin, they will never see it. There is an absolute necessity for all men once to choose a new way, and turn off from the way they are naturally going in. God set upright Adam on a way to life, the way of perfect obedience; Eccl. vii. 29; but he left it, and all his posterity in him; Rom. v. 12. There is a new and living way opened by Christ, the way of walking in him; Col. ii. 6. This is the narrow way; and that unbelievers were never on.

2. There is access for sinners off the way to life, yet to get on it; Prov. ix. 4—6. Wanderers may yet set right; they that are going in the way of death may yet be set on the way of life. While they are not arrived at their journey's end, there is still hope; therefore, Matth. v. 25, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou

art in the way with him," &c. But once come to the journey's end by death, there is no more hope; Eccl. ix. 10.

3. There is a gate, though a strait one, by which they may get through to the narrow way to life. This is the appointed entrance into it; whoever would be in on it, must go about, and enter by it; and going through the gate, they shall be undoubtedly on the way; John x. 9. Look about then to discern it.

4. *Lastly*, There is no getting on the narrow way, but by the strait gate, John iii. 5. To climb up another way, is a vain and fruitless attempt. As is one's entrance, so will his progress be. The actions must needs be of the nature of the principle; and there will be no bringing forth of good fruit in the narrow way, till once the tree be made good by entering in at the strait gate, Matth. vii. 17.

2*dly*, The strait gate being the entrance into the way leading to life, it is, in plain terms, an inward and thorough change, relative and real, made on a sinner. For this is it, without which there is no reaching the way of true holiness, the way leading to life. I say,

1. It is a change made on the sinner, whereby he is not what he was before; 2 Cor. v. 17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." This cannot be refused by any, who acknowledge themselves born sinners. To continue and go on in sin, in vanity and vileness, is inconsistent with entering on the narrow way to life; Rom. viii. 13, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." You must then undergo a change, from what you naturally are and incline to, if ever you mind for life.

2. It is an inward change; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. An outward change without that will not do. A new life and conversation pinned to the old corrupt heart and nature, will make but a painted sepulchre, that can never be pleasing to him, who "sees not as man sees, but looks to the heart;" 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Matth. xxiii. 27, 28. True holiness lies inwardly, though it shines forth in the outward man; 1 Pet. iii. 4; and without an inward gracious principle, all is hypocrisy, mere form and show.

3. It is a real change, affecting one's nature, and making it new; 2 Pet. i. 4. There must be a new temper of spirit, with a new bent and set of the heart; whereby one is made to incline to the way of holiness he was averse to before; and disinclined to the vanity and vileness he was prone and bent to formerly. Therefore it is called a "being born again;" John iii. 3, a "a putting on the new man;" Eph. iv. 24. And there is a necessity for such a change, in order to

holiness of life; for there must be new gracious qualities in our nature, to be a principle of holy walking.

4. It is a relative change, affecting one's state; 1 Cor. vi. 11. Children of wrath will always be children of disobedience; and cursed trees will never bring forth blessed fruits. They must be in a state of grace and favour with God, standing in new relations, who shall walk with God, in the narrow way to life; Rom. viii. 1. To expect that those who are not children of God, will obey him; that those who are not at peace with him, shall serve him acceptably; that they who are under the curse of the broken law, shall walk in the way of life, is vain. The first covenant may have children; but they will be bond-children; to be cast out, not to be heirs; Gal. iv. 24, 30.

5. *Lastly*, It is a thorough change; 2 Cor. v. 17. It must go through the whole man; every part being sanctified, though in this life no part be wholly sanctified; 1 Thess. v. 23. Light let into the head, while there is no gracious change in the heart; a casting away some sins, while others are still stuck to; a taking of some scrapes of the law for the rule of our life, while another part of it is staved off; is a plain evidence, that one is not entered by the gate.

Thus ye see the gate by which one enters the narrow way; thus ye have a general prospect of it. To describe it more particularly, there are these seven steps of it:—

1. Conviction, conviction of sin and misery. This is the very first step, the awakening of the sinner, and coming to see himself all wrong. A new light shining from heaven, the man by it sees his sin as he never saw it before; John xvi. 8. His sins are set in order before him, and stare him in the face like a ghost. He sees his actual sin, and his original sin; the evil of them, and their contrariety to the holy nature and law of God. He sees his misery, he beholds himself lost and undone; Luke xv. 17; Rom. vii. 9, under the wrath of God, the curse of the broken law, and the bands of death.

2. Saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ; 2 Cor. iv. 6. This is the merchantman's finding the one pearl; Matth. xiii. 46. Hereby the sinner sees a Saviour in the transcendent glory of his person and offices, able and willing to help him out of his state of sin and misery; a Saviour suited to the divine perfections, and to his own case; on whom therefore he may freely venture his salvation. This is a higher step of the gate, whereon the sinner is brought in sight of the narrow way.

3. Renewing of the will, whereby the sinner is made pliable to the

gospel-call; Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Psalm cx. 3. The iron sinew in the neck is hereby broken; the sinner called by the gospel, is hereby drawn with cords of love and bands of a man. Christ seen in his glory, captivates his heart; John xii. 32. By this saving work on the mind and will, the dead sinner is quickened; there is a vital principle put in the soul, whereby the soul is both persuaded and enabled to go up a step.

4. Faith in Jesus Christ, believing on his name; John i. 12. Thus the merchantman buys the one pearl; Matth. xiii. 46. The soul being drawn comes to Christ, and comes away to him freely, taking him for all, and instead of all; Psalm lxxiii. 25. The soul bids an eternal farewell to the way of vanity and vileness, no more to go in quest of happiness there; Jer. xvi. 19, looks for the supply of all its wants in and from Christ alone; for by faith we are married to Christ, and so come to rest in him.

5. New relations to heaven. This is a glorious step which a sinner gets up to by faith; and it lies here. The sinner having believed in Christ, is united to him; Eph. iii. 17; being united to him, is justified; 1 Cor. vi. 11; being justified, is reconciled to God; Rom. v. 1; being reconciled, is adopted into the family of heaven; Eph. ii. 16, 19; being adopted, God is his God; John xx. 17. Whereas formerly being out of Christ, he was a condemned creature, an enemy to God, a child of the devil, without God in the world.

6. Habitual sanctification, the sanctification of our nature; Eph. i. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 11. Hereby the sinner's nature is renewed; Eph. iv. 23, 24, his whole person, soul and body, is sanctified; 1 Thess. v. 23. New qualities are infused into the mind, will, and affections; whereby he becomes a new creature, formed after the image of God, because formed in a likeness to the man Christ, by receiving out of his fulness grace for grace; John i. 16. Thus the seeds of all graces are planted in him, new habits, habits of grace, the immediate principles of every gracious action.

7. *Lastly*, Repentance unto life, true gospel-repentance; Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; Ezek. xxxvi. 31. This is the highest and last step of the strait gate, which immediately sets the man on the narrow way leading to life. It is not that legal repentance, which being the effect of a work of conviction by law, judging and condemning the sinner, falls in with the first step of the strait gate. But it is that whereby a sinner, not only convinced of his sin and misery, but illuminated in the knowledge of Christ, having his will renewed, believing, new related to heaven, and having his nature sanctified, does turn from sin unto God, out of love to God, and hatred of sin, as

contrary to his holy will and nature; which is the only repentance acceptable to God. And before a sinner is thus furnished for it, it is impossible he can reach it.

But until one is brought to this repentance, he can never set a foot on the narrow way of holiness leading to life; Acts ii. 18. For before one can go right, he must needs turn right; and he can never turn right from sin unto God, till he turn thus. The whole gate is a strait gate, and this is a strait step; but no man, without making it first, shall ever go a step in the narrow way; Luke xiii. 3.

II. We shall consider "the narrow way leading away unto life." And here we shall consider, 1. The narrow way itself. 2. Its leading away unto life.

*First*, The narrow way itself. That is the way into which the strait gate sets a person; the gate leads him on the way, so that having passed through the gate, he is on this way. Here consider 1. What this way is. 2. The parts of it. 3. The narrowness of it.

1*st*, What is this way? This way is the way of holiness; Isa. xxxv. 8, "An highway shall be there, and a way, and its hall be called the way of holiness." The broad way is the way of one's own heart; the narrow way is the way according to the heart of a holy God; the broad way is the way of vanity and vileness; the narrow way is the way of purity and holiness; Psalm xxiv. 3, 4.

There is a twofold holiness, habitual and actual. Habitual holiness is holiness of nature, in a holy new frame and disposition of soul, whereby the man is reconciled unto the holy law, which he was at war with before; the heart inclining unto those things which the law commands, and disinclining to, and having an aversion to the things that it forbids. Hence it is expressed by "the law written on the heart;" the renewed heart and the law lying both one way, and agreeing as an honest man's thoughts and written words whereby he expresseth his thoughts; Heb. viii. 10, "For this is the covenant which I make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts," &c. But this belongs to the strait gate, being that which the entering in at the strait gate issues in.

Actual holiness is holiness of life, in thoughts, words, and actions of a holy kind; whereby a man walks up in some measure to the holy principles and dispositions of the new nature, and so adds a new life to his new nature; 2 Pet. i. 5—7; that is, having gone through the strait gate, he walks on the narrow way. So, more particularly,

The narrow way is the way of obedience; 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. That is the way that leadeth to life; even as Jesus Christ was, during his life in the world, obedient even to the death of the cross, and then

was received up into glory; whom therefore we must follow in this way, if we mind to be with him in the end; Heb. xii. 1, 2. Now, there are two things that go to the constitution of the way of holy obedience.

1. For the matter thereof, it is the way of God's commandments; Psalm cxix. 32. It is the holy law that chalks out this way to us, in the several commands of God therein. Where there is no commandment, there can be no obedience. Whatever shew of holiness there may be in things that God has not commanded, it is but superstition, not holy obedience; Matth. xv. 9. Where there is a transgressing of the commandment, by omission or commission, there is a going off the way of holy obedience, which is bounded on every side by the holy commandment. Thus the narrow way is distinguished from the way,

(1.) Of profanity; wherein men walk after their own lusts, casting God's commandments behind their backs. These refuse to be narrowed in their walk by the rule of life given in the word; they look upon it as a thing that would hamper them, and therefore practically say, as Psalm ii. 3, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Their lusts, not the holy law, is their rule.

(2.) Of superstition; wherein men, without the commandment of God, pretend to serve and obey him in a holy manner. This is a narrow way of men's own making, Matth xv. 2. They themselves devise commands of their own hearts, and make things duty or sin, which God has not made so, Col. ii. 20—22.

In opposition to both these, the narrow way is the way of God's commandments; that, and that only, which is pointed out to us by the authority of God in the moral law of the ten commands; the which the profane man neglects, and the superstitious adds unto; but the true Christian takes, as it stands, for the rule, and the only rule of his life, afraid either to neglect it, or add unto it.

2. For the form thereof, it is the way of walking in Christ, Col. ii. 6. Without this, the walking in the way of the commandment is no holy obedience, but a legal selfish course of life, which, though it may be of use in society among men, yet is not acceptable to God, because it savours not of Christ, John xv. 5. This makes it true Gospel obedience, the only obedience that a sinner can expect to have taken off his hand with acceptance in the court of heaven. It lies in these four things:

(1.) In taking the law as out of the hand, not of an absolute God, but of a God in Christ, Matth. xvii. 5. Natural men, because of their spiritual blindness, receive the law as innocent Adam did,

from God, without eyeing the Mediator as the channel of its conveyance; hence they set themselves to obey it as they can and think meet, that they may have life by their obedience to it. This mars their obedience, makes it servile, and unacceptable to God, Gal. iv. 24, 30, because it is not perfect. But the true Christian receives the law from a God Redeemer and Saviour in Christ, Exod. xx. 1, 2. Hence receiving life by faith in the free promise, they set themselves to obey out of love to a reconciled God, in point of gratitude to the Redeemer, and as the way in which he has appointed them to walk towards the perfection of that life he has purchased, and bestows of free grace.

(2.) In depending on Christ for strength for every step of their way, as branches that must bring forth fruit by communication of sap from the stock, John xv. 5. This the Apostle exhorts to; 2 Tim. ii. 1, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Hence the Christian goes out in the way of holy obedience, as David went out against Goliah, "in the name of the Lord of Hosts;" 1 Sam. xvii. 45; "in the name of the Lord Jesus," Col. iii. 17. Therefore in his obedience he is self-denied, and humble, acknowledging himself an unprofitable servant when he has done all.

(3.) In depending on him for acceptance of all their obedience, not daring to trust the acceptance thereof to the nature of the work itself, Gen. iv. 4, compared with Heb. xi. 4. This is a difficult step in the narrow way, which none but true Christians do make, Phil. iii. 3. To be denied to our obedience when it is done, to lay no stress of its acceptance, on our diligence, sincerity, and attainments in it, is not easy. However, it is certain, that the acceptance is for Christ's sake only, 1 Pet. ii. 5.

(4.) *Lastly*, In daily recourse to Jesus Christ for purging away the errors of our way, Zech. xiii. 1. There are none that walk so exactly, but they are still making wrong steps, and contracting new defilement, which cannot be purged but by the application of the blood of sprinkling; nay, there is not one step the best make, but there is some defilement cleaves to them in it, so that still they need to wash their feet, John xiii. 10. This, then, is the daily exercise in the narrow way; and there is no walking in it but in Christ.

The sum of what is said, is, That the narrow way is the way of holy obedience, wherein one walks in Christ, in the way of God's commandments. And this way of holy obedience may be taken up in these two.

1. The way of doing or working, in obedience to the preceptive will of God, Eccl. ix. 10. God sets every man the work he has to

do, his salvation work, and his generation work; in every relation wherein we stand to God or men, our duty is set us by his commandment; he has appointed us what we have to do for his honour, and the good of ourselves and others. And to the performance of every part thereof we are to set ourselves, in obedience to his will, and that in Christ Jesus.

2. The way of bearing or suffering, in obedience to his providential will, Matth. xvi. 24. God allots to every one their particular burden of crosses and afflictions; and requires them to go on their way under them, for their trial. Here is exercise for the bearing graces, faith, self-denial, patience, hope, &c. And we must set ourselves to the Christian bearing of these things, in obedience to his will, and that in Christ Jesus.

Thus shall we walk in the narrow way, doing and bearing in Christ, taking our duty and our trial as out of his hand, and going on with both in a believing reliance on him.

And this way bears a two-fold set of marks upon it, all along from the beginning to the end of it.

1. The footsteps of the flock, Christ's flock, Cant i. 8. It is the way wherein the company of the saints have travelled in all generations; so that those who will see, may see the prints of the feet of Christ's flock on the narrow way, as those of the devil's drove are to be seen on the broad way. On the former you will see the prints of the feet of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, all the Old and New Testament saints; on the latter you will see the prints of the feet of Cain, Pharaoh, Judas, and all the wicked in all generations. The habitual practice of the saints is what makes these footsteps in the narrow way, consisting of two discernible parts.

(1.) The fore-part, viz., faith, faith in Christ, and the promises through him. This is the fore part of their footsteps, that being it by which the saints from Abel, in all generations, did and suffered great things, Heb. xi. 1—39. They believed, and worked their good works; believed, and bore their trials and afflictions. The promise of Christ was given, Gen. iii. 15, to set them at first on the way, and the very first motion on it was Adam and Eve's believing it; and so it has been in every footstep of the flock since, and will to the end, Gal. ii. 20.

(2.) The hind part, viz., sincere obedience. This is the print of the heel, Heb. xi. 4, 5, 7, &c. Believing the truth, they conformed to it in their lives being cast into the mould of it; receiving the promise by faith, they sincerely obeyed the command; embracing the Gospel, they took the law for the rule of their life, making no exception of any of its commands, as seeing them all stamped with

the authority of their God, Creator, and Redeemer; having received Christ the Lord, they walked in him in all holy obedience.

Thus the footsteps of the flock are distinguished from all other. Many a different footstep is on the broad way, but none of them all are of this make. The footsteps of atheists and infidels are to be seen there, of profane ones, mere moralists, formalists, and hypocrites; but as the fore part of all their steps is unbelief, so the hind part is profanity, or mere external hypocritical obedience, unacceptable to God. Either they are legalists, pretenders to obedience, and neglecters of faith; or carnal Gospellers, pretenders to faith, making no conscience of good works, or universal obedience; or they are profane contemners of both. But the footsteps of the flock consist of both together, James ii. 18.

2. The footsteps of Christ himself; 1 Pet. ii. 21. All mankind having gone off their way, and not knowing how to find it again, it pleased the Father to send his own Son in our nature into the world, that, by his walking in the world, men might see, in a bright example, the way of walking acceptable to God. Accordingly he came, and entering on the narrow way, he walked it all along, and left the prints of his feet thereon from the beginning to the end thereof; Phil. ii. 8. In the example of the best of the saints, there are some wrong, out-of-the-way steps; but his footsteps are perfectly regular, without the least imperfection, or the least part of a step out of the way. And they also consist of two parts.

(1.) Faith in God his Father, and the promises of the covenant made to him. Christ in his divine nature is the object of faith; John xiv. 1, compared with Jer. xvii. 5; but in his human nature he was a subject of faith. The man Christ believed in God his Father, trusted in him perfectly, and relied on him, upon the ground of his faithfulness; Psalm xxii. 8, 9; Heb. ii. 13. He had promises of assistance; Isaiah xlii. 6, acceptance and a glorious reward; chap. xlix. 8; Heb. xii. 2. And accordingly he waited for the fulfilment of them, and was not disappointed; Psalm xl. 1, and declares the divine faithfulness from his experience; verse 10. Yea even now in his exaltation at the right hand of God, he continues his faith and assured hope of what of the promises remains to be accomplished; so that the man Christ in glory is a believing waiter still, Heb. x. 12, 13; which should endear to us waiting on God, since the man Christ himself was, and still is one of the company of believing waiters on God. And this shows us how Christ came to receive the seals of the covenant, the sacraments, viz., to confirm his faith in God.

Here then we have the print of Christ's own footsteps in believing,

which also makes the fore-part of them; for the man Christ believed, and so obeyed; which is lively set forth, Isaiah l. 5—7, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Hence when he came into the world, he was circumcised on the eighth day; before he entered on his public ministry, he was baptized, had the voice from heaven, and then was carried to the wilderness; Mark i. 9—12; and before he entered on the hardest piece of all his work, he received the sacrament of the passover and of the supper.

(2.) Perfect obedience. As his faith was, so was his obedience perfect, every way complete and sinless; 1 Pet. ii. 22. It was perfect in parts; Matth. iii. 15, he fulfilled all righteousness. In the doing part, he accounted nothing too hard, loving his very enemies; in the suffering part, he went through the hardest pieces mildly and patiently; Phil. ii. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 23; perfect in the degrees of it, everything carried to the utmost pitch; Isaiah xlii. 4; in the principle of it, love to his Father's glory, and the salvation of sinners; perfect love appearing in the greatest possible instances; Psalm xl. 6—8; and in continuance from the cradle to the grave; Phil. ii. 8.

Thus Christ walked the narrow way; and, by the prints of his feet, put another set of marks on it, whereby it is more fully and clearly distinguished from all other ways. The imperfections that attend the saints' walk, leave the matter of the way in some obscurity; so that carnal men noticing them, from thence would make the narrow way very broad, since in many paths of destruction, they can discern the footsteps of saints. The adulterer sees David's footsteps in his way, the drunkard, Noah's; the curser and swearer, and apostate, Peter's; not considering that these were the out-of-the-way footsteps, from which they turned back by bitter repentance, in which steps they neglect to follow them. But the footsteps of the Shepherd of the flock, puts the way beyond all doubt; that it is the way of purity and holiness, the way of faith and obedience, that has nothing in common with the broad way, the way of sin.

*Secondly*, What are the parts of this way, the narrow way? Many are the steps or pieces of the way, from the beginning of it at the point of conversion to God, unto the end of it at death; and it is longer to some than to others, partly because of the various lengths of men's lives, partly because some are so happy as to be more easily converted than others; which two things make an un-

equal length of the way. But longer or shorter, it consists of two parts.

1*st*, The way of mortification; Rom. viii. 13, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." This is a part of the narrow way, which lies all along from the beginning to the end of it, in which therefore the saints going towards life must still be making progress, since they will never come to the end of it till death. The strait gate of conversion and regeneration sets one upon it, because these are not perfect; but still there is a mixture of the old with the new nature; of sin and corruption with holiness. It lies in these two.

1. Mortification to the creature, in opposition to the way of vanity. This is begun in the soul's coming to Christ; Jer. xvi. 19, and is to be carried on all along the believer's life after; Cant. iv. 8, till he be without the reach of an enchanting deluding world, no more to be moved either with its smiles or frowns. Paul was on that way when he said; Gal. vi. 14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The Lord carries on his people in it, by ordinances, giving them there lively views of creature vanity and emptiness, in the glass of the word, sacraments, prayer, meditation, &c.; by providences laying gall and wormwood on the breasts of the creature, till the believer be as a weaned child; Psalm cxxxi.

2. Mortification to sin, in opposition to the way of vileness that unregenerate sinners walk in, Rom. vi. 6, 7. This is to get the mouth out of taste to the pleasures of sin, to be dying to it, to be rooting up the weeds of sin daily, that grow up in the soil of an evil heart. And it reaches to the whole body of the sins of the flesh, if it be genuine mortification, Col. ii. 11. If any one is known and spared, it is no true mortification; the man is in the way to death and destruction, as the ship to sinking where one leak is neglected to be stopped, Psalm cxix. 6. Particularly, it reaches to,

(1.) Particular lusts and corruptions, the members of this body; Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." These are many, and of divers kinds, fleshly lusts, and spiritual lusts; pleasing lusts, and tormenting passions. All come under the name of worldly lusts, which the gospel teaches to deny the cravings of, Tit. ii. 12. On every one of them, men in the way to life keep a watchful eye, to knock them down as they begin to set up their heads; to wrestle against them, seeking their death and destruction.

In a special manner, that lust which one is most addicted to, commonly called one's predominant; whether it be the sin which one's constitution, calling, circumstances, or anything whatsoever, makes most easily to beset him, Heb. xii. 1; that must be mortified, though it be as hard to compass as to pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand, Matth. v. 29, 30. And none can prove himself on the narrow way, without the mortification of that, Psalm xviii. 23. And we may judge of our progress in the narrow way, by our progress in that.

(2.) The sin of our nature, the body itself whereof these particular lusts are the members, called the flesh, Gal. v. 24. That sinful disposition that is born with us, making us prone to evil, and averse to good; ready to comply with temptations to sin, hard to be brought up to our duty; holding fast ill impressions made, and letting good ones easily slip. The axe of mortification must be laid at the root of the tree, if we would take the narrow way.

Now these are mortified by refusing compliance with them, and acting the graces contrary to them, Gal. v. 16, 17. Hereby they are starved and weakened, and grace is cherished and strengthened, Rom. xiii. 14; Heb. v. 14.

2*dly*, The way of vivification, or newness of life, Rom. vi. 4; in the practice of good works, Tit. iii. 8; that is, thoughts, words, or deeds agreeable to the will of God, and pleasing in his sight. This is another part of the narrow way, which lies all along from the strait gate to the end of the way at death; which the grace implanted in the heart in regeneration exerts itself in; for the new nature must have its fruit in newness of life, whereby a man lives to the honour of God, his own good, and the good of mankind. It also lies in two things.

1. Living to God, in opposition to the creature, Gal. ii. 19. The unregenerate man is dead to God, but alive to the creature; all the inward motions of his soul are towards the creature, not towards God. It is his portion; his joy is in the having of it, and his sorrow in the want of it. He has no kindly motion towards God for himself, more than they that are in the grave. But entering the strait gate of regeneration, one becomes alive to God, Rom. vi. 11; and dead to the creature, Col. iii. 3. And so he goes on the narrow way, as dying to the creature, so living to God; resting in him as his portion, seeking him always as his chief good, loving him above all, joying and delighting in the enjoyment of him, sorrowing for the want thereof, and for sin that mars the light of his countenance, Col. iii. 1—3. All this the tenor of his life witnesseth, Psalm xxx. 5; and iv. 6, 7.

2. Living to righteousness, in opposition to sin, 1 Pet. ii. 24. The unregenerate are dead to righteousness, but alive to sin, Rom. vi. 20; as free from righteousness as those in the grave from what is done on the earth, they meddle not with it, Eph. ii. 1. But entering the strait gate of regeneration, they are put in a state of death to sin, and of life to righteousness, Rom. vi. 4; Col. iii. 1; they awake to it, 1 Cor. xv. 34. And so they go on in the narrow way, living to it as servants of it, Rom. vi. 18. And this their living to righteousness extends to the whole will of God known to them, Acts xiii. 22; Col. iv. 12; and makes their obedience universal, Col. i. 10. It lies in these following things.

(1.) Living to righteousness towards God; that is, living godly, Tit. ii. 12. There is a duty that in justice we owe to God immediately, as our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer; that is, the duty of piety, in all the instances thereof required in the first table. Whoso walk on the narrow way, live to pay that duty, as owing, in point of righteousness and gratitude too. Therefore they are concerned to live to honour him in the world, taking that for their chief business in it, Phil. i. 21; and see no comfortable use they are for in the world, if they get him not honoured in their stations. So they look on their interest as twisted with the interests of his glory.

(2.) Living to righteousness towards ourselves; that is, living soberly, Tit. ii. 12. We owe a duty to ourselves, and it is bound on us with a bond of justice or righteousness, in as much as we are not our own, but the Lord's. That duty is required of us in the second table obliging us to consult the good, honour, and welfare of our own bodies, to treat them as the temples of God, and therefore to hold off from all things that may be hurtful or defiling to them; and to advance the good of our own souls, by aiming at and pursuing after their perfection in truth and holiness, Phil. iii. 14; and to hold off from what may darken or pollute them. And this is a great part of the business of the life of those on the narrow way.

(3.) Living to righteousness towards our neighbour; that is, living righteously, strictly so called, Tit. ii. 12. We are not born for ourselves, but for others also; and we owe a duty to mankind, our fellow-creatures, according to the several instances thereof required in the second table. Since we are men, we must always keep on, never cast off humanity towards any of our kind, be they rich or poor above us or below us. We should breathe an universal good-will toward mankind, seeking the good of our kind, and disposed to acts of beneficence towards them, as we have ability and opportunity. This humanity requireth, justice makes a debt, and Christianity inspires men with, who are on the narrow way, Gal. vi. 10; Luke vi.

36. Ah! how will we answer to our common Father, if we take no care to be useful to, and in our generation? What stock have we laid up for the other world, if we have not laid out ourselves for the good of others in this? Luke xvi. 9. That temper of spirit whereby one is selfish, concerned for none, but his sweet self, is a flaming evidence of being on the broad way; and much more that whereby one is disposed to run down all about them, to spread their terror around them, to be a plague to society, disturbing all that are near them, Eccles. ix. 18. If those in that temper see heaven, we must give up the Bible as a fable, and confound heaven and hell, Isa. xi. 6; Tit. iii. 3; James ii. 13; Rev. xiii. 10.

Thus ye see that those on the narrow way look upward, inward, and outward, labouring each of these ways to be useful, and to fill up their room in the world; so living to righteousness.

And these two parts of the narrow way Christ hath chalked out to his followers by his death and resurrection, which are the exemplary causes of mortification and vivification.

*Thirdly*, Let us consider the narrowness of the way to life. This narrowness of the way is not absolute, but respective, in respect of the imperfection of our present state; for the boundaries of it are eternal, it being for substance the very same the saints will walk in through eternity, when they will walk at greatest liberty. But a way may be very narrow and pressing to one, that will be perfectly large and easy to another, in regard of the very different sizes the passengers may be of. So a shoe may be very strait for a swelled foot, that will be large abundantly for the same foot, when it is hale and sound. The glorified saints have a hale foot; so the way is large and broad enough to them in life; we have the swelled one; so the way, though for substance the same, is narrow to us going to life. Now the narrowness of the way to life rises from a complication of these three.

1*st*. The exactness and purity of the law that bounds this way of holy obedience, Psalm cxix. 4. No sinful latitude is allowed here; every wrong step is condemned by it. It hems in the traveller on every side, and that,

1. To the right matter of obedience; which is not to be measured by man's choice but God's command; Matth. xv. 9. If it is devised by a man's own heart, whatever species pretext of sanctity it has, it is rejected with a "Who hath required this at your hand?" Isaiah i. 12; and far more if it is forbidden of God, it is an abomination to him, though one should be so blind as to think it good service; John xvi. 2. There is no holy obedience but in what is commanded of God.

2. To the right manner of obedience. Suppose it be a thing that

in itself is duty, yet if it is not done in a right manner, it is no walking in the narrow way. Here the traveller is hemmed in to,

(1.) The love of God, as the principle of his obedience. His labour must be a labour of love, else it is lost labour; Heb. vi. 10. Love to God himself must dispose us to obey him, else he will not reckon we obey him at all; for he sees the heart; and what is not with the heart can never be acceptable; 2 Cor. viii. 12.

(2.) The will of God must be not only the rule, but the reason of our obedience; Eph. vi. 6, 7. It is no true faith, but where one believes because God has said it; nor holy obedience, but where the thing is done because God has bid it. So one may do what God commands, and yet not obey him, if he does it not in obedience to his command.

(3.) To the glory of God as the chief end of his obedience; 1 Cor. x. 31. If any thing else have that place, God will not reckon it obedience to him; Zech. vii. 6. So there is much lost labour, where though the thing in itself be duty, yet it is marred by the low and selfish ends it is done for; Matth. vi. 1. Thus ministers may lose their preaching, people their prayers, any body whatsoever good they do, doing the same for selfish ends.

(4.) *Lastly*, Faith in God through Christ, as that which casts their obedience into the mould of gospel-obedience, the only holy obedience of a sinner; Col. iii. 17. The work of faith in the case is to fetch in strength from Jesus for holy obedience; 2 Tim. ii. 1, and so to perform it, Phil. iv. 13; and then to lay it over on Jesus for acceptance with God, Heb. xi. 4, 6.

2*dly*, The bias of the heart that lies away from and contrary to the holy law. This the apostle complains of as what made his walking in the way uneasy; Rom. vii. 21. There are notable remains of the natural enmity in the best while they are here, a woful disposition not liking to be bounded by the pure commandment. There are lusts of the heart that bend forth on every side, and cannot be hedged in without pain. Hence the way appears narrow, and feels strait and pinching; and the walking in it is indeed one continued struggle to the end; the way of holy obedience lying quite cross to the natural inclination, over the belly of which the traveller must go. Now there being nothing of this in heaven, the way of obedience will not be narrow to the saints there.

3*dly*, The many embarrassments in this way from without. Our text (Gr.) calls it an afflicted or compressed way. Had the children of God no more ado but to make their way forward in the path of God's commandments, over the belly of their own corruptions, they might have enough ado with it. But that is not all; whatever im-

pediments or entanglements Satan and an evil world can get laid in their way, will be sure to be found there. Hence they have thickets of temptations, tribulations, discouragements, &c., to break through. Sometimes the smiles of the world are fain to flatter them off their way; sometimes its frowns to frighten them from it; and sometimes a speat of ill example is like to carry them off their feet. Besides all this, there are trials from the hand of God to be met with in it. So that it is a way beset with briars and thorns; Eph. vi. 12; John xvi. 33. Hence, Heb. xii. 1, 2, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

*Secondly*, We are to consider this way its leading away to life. And here I will show, 1. What is that life it leads to. 2. How the narrow way leads to it.

*First*, What is that life the narrow way leads to? That is in a word, a happy life in the other world; Mark x. 30. Entering the strait gate, the dead sinner gets life, else he could never go on the narrow way; and the life then received is eternal; for from the moment it is received, it shall never be extinguished through the ages of eternity. But there is so great a difference, in degrees and attending circumstances, betwixt the believer's life here, and in heaven, that this last is called life by way of eminency. For,

1. Heaven is the region of life where no death can enter; but whosoever is there, lives; Rev. xxi. 4. This world at best is a mixture of the dead and the living, even above ground; and more than that, the dead always are the far greater part in the mixture, which makes this world an unsavoury, melancholy place to them in whom spiritual life is begun; Psalm cxx. 5. But when they come there, they will find themselves in the land of life, where there is no winter, but an eternal spring; no dead, but all living.

2. Their life will be perfected there; Heb. xii. 23. It is begun here indeed; but yet there is a great mixture of death with it, even in the liveliest saints here; they have a whole body of death carrying about with them; Rom. vii. 24. But there will not be the least member of it about them there. Even their life of comfort will be completed there, though they may have much ado to keep it from extinction here.

3. *Lastly*, No death can ever have access there; but there life will be spun out in joy and comfort to all eternity, without any interruption. While they are here they still know that death is abid-

ing them; but when they arrive there, they know they are for ever beyond its reach any more. They are set down there by the fountain of life, and allowed a full participation of the waters of life, that they can die no more.

*Secondly*, How does the narrow way lead to life? And,

1*st*. NEG. Not by way of merit, proper or improper. Proper merit is what arises from the intrinsic worth of the thing done, fully proportioned to the reward. Such is the merit of Christ's obedience and death. But no such merit can be in our works; for there is no proportion between our obedience and eternal life, whatever the papists pretend; Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17; and whatever they be, they are due from us to God; Rom. viii. 12; Luke xvii. 10. Improper merit is what arises from paction ensuring such a reward on such a work as the condition thereof; so that the work being performed, the reward becomes a debt. So Adam's perfect obedience would have been meritorious, namely by paction. But no such merit is in our works. Legal protestants advance this, though they do not call it merit, while they pretend that God has promised eternal life on condition of our obedience; thinking it enough to free them from the doctrine of merit, that they do not pretend to an intrinsic worth in the works, proportioned to the reward. But what more do they yield in this, than innocent Adam behoved to have yielded, had he perfected his obedience? Do they not hereby confound the two covenants? for all the difference remains only in degrees, which do not alter the kind. The scripture rejects this as well as the other; Rom. iv. 4, and vi. 23. Paul would not lippen to it; Phil. iii. 9.

2*dly*, Positively, The narrow way leads to life by way of order and connection. It leads thereto,

1. By way of order in the nature of things, whereby one thing necessarily goes before another. Thus the beginning of a thing goes before the end of it; and there is no reaching the end without beginning it. So the narrow way is the beginning of the Christian course, eternal life in heaven the end of it, Rom. vi. 22. Thus the sun rising must go before its getting to the meridian, the seed-time before the harvest, and the first fruits before the whole. So walking in the narrow way must go before life in heaven, Prov. iv. 18, Psalm cxxvi. 5, Rom. viii. 25. This establishes infallibly the necessity of holy obedience, it being as impossible for subjects capable of holy obedience to see life without it, as to reach the end without beginning the work, &c., Heb. xii. 14. But will any say, that the beginning, the sun rising, &c., are the condition upon which the end is given, the sun is set to the meridian, &c.?

2. By way of connection, whereby one thing is knit with another,

whether in the nature of things, or by special appointment. Thus the means and the end, the way and the journey's end, are connected in the nature of things; that whoso neglects the means cannot reach the end; that whoso takes not the way cannot reach the journey's end. So the narrow way is the mean or mids to be gone through, the way to the journey's end eternal life, Phil. iii. 13, 14. Thus the wrestling and the prize, the Christian fight and the crown, are connected by divine appointment; but the former does neither properly merit the latter, nor is it the condition thereof, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, compared with Rev. iv. 10. In the narrow way there must be fighting, because there is opposition; but if ye go along that way, ye will get to life, even as if ye go by such and such places, ye will get to such a city; yet is not the going that way the condition of admission into the city.

The true state of the matter lies here. Eternal life is freely given to the soul here in the first moment of believing; it is begun in them, John iii. 36, and v. 24, 1 John v. 12. It exerts itself, and hath its operation and progress in the walking in the narrow way; and death being the end of the way, where the body of death is dropt, the soul then comes to have that life completed, as one having perfected the journey enters the city. The which overthrows all merit and conditionality of works as to eternal life, and in the meantime infallibly establishes the necessity of them to it, viz., considered in its perfection in heaven.

Practical inferences may be deduced from the whole.

*First*, An easy entrance on religion is somewhat suspicious like and needs to be examined; because it is a strait gate that leads to life. I will not take on me to deny a sovereign gospel-way of conversion, that swallows up any notable law-work, though I have no experience of it. A sovereign God must not be limited; but I may say this,

1. It is not the ordinary way. Ordinarily a law-work, greater in some and lesser in others, goes before, according to that Gal. iii. 24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Thus the converts, Acts ii., Paul, the jailor, and others. And hereto I believe the experience of Christians generally does agree. As for Lydia, she was a convert before, a Jewish proselyte, Acts xvi. 14.

2. The easy way of entering on religion is a flaw in the foundation, in the case of some; Matth xiii. 20, "But he that received the seed in stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it." Where observe, (1.) There is a receiving the word of the Gospel at first brush, anon. (2.) There is

a mighty stir in the affections at that reception; the party is transported with joy. (3.) The flaw lies in the superficialness of the work, its not going deep enough, verse 5, viz., by the digging work of conviction and humiliation, Luke vi. 48, so that the party hath no root, Matth. xiii. 21. (4.) *Lastly*, As it came lightly, it goes lightly, *ibid.*

3. Whoever pretend to it, ought well to examine it before they sit down contented with it. And this may be done, to the sufficient clearing of the matter.

(1.) By considering what their entrance, whatever it was, set them into. If it set them into a sound and thorough repentance for sin, the matter needs no more dispute; if not, their pretences are vain. If their repentance was sound and thorough, whatever they had or had not before, they then got a piercing sight and sense of the sin of their lives, and sin of their nature too, and sincerely repented of both; Gal. v. 24, and particularly of their predominant, from which their hearts would then be loosed in a particular manner; Luke xix. 8.

(2.) By considering what way they are on. If their habitual tract and course of life is a course of holy obedience, let them not disquiet themselves as to the manner of their entry; for it is not possible to get on the narrow way, but by the right gate; Psalm cxix. 6. But as the straitest law-work issuing in a loose course of life, will be found to have been but a foretaste of hell; so an easy way of entering on religion, followed with a loose and licentious course of life, will be found to be the wide gate and broad way to destruction. That was the religion of some, whom in our fathers' days they justly called Antinomians and Ranters, who, pretending to a sovereign gospel-way of conversion, gave the swing to their lusts, and led scandalous lives, a reproach to the gospel. But if that be the gate to life, we may throw by our Bibles, and regard them no more; but (2 Pet. ii. 17.) "these are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."

*Secondly*, Strictness in religion, nice, exact, and pointed walking therein, is not only justifiable, but necessary; for narrow is the way that leads unto life, and it will not allow wide steps. It is the way of the world to expose the entering by the strait gate under the name of "melancholy, madness," and "distraction;" and strict walking on the narrow way, under the name of "fantastic singularity, preciseness, and needless nicety." But let the world cry it down as they will, the Bible, and particularly our text, cries it up as not only justifiable, but necessary.

But before I come to justify it, and shew the necessity of it, I must first fix the true notion of it. For there is a spurious strictness in religion, which is oft mistaken for the genuine strictness, especially by the parties themselves; whereas the former belongs to the broad way, the latter only to the narrow. That there is such a spurious strictness, is without controversy; Acts xxvi. 5, "After the strictest sect of his religion, Paul lived a Pharisee;" and therefore the apostle's caution is very necessary; Gal. iv. 18, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Now,

1. This spurious strictness in religion, which is to be rejected as a work of the flesh, is a strictness of men's own making. It is not God's commandment that girds them so strait; but where God leaves them at liberty, they bind up themselves; and so their strictness is downright superstition in the sense of the Bible, however they may pretend to be enemies to superstition; Matth. xv. 9; Col. ii. 20—22. And so it is, though they may take themselves to be bound to it, by God's commandment, while in reality there is no such thing; John xvi. 2. For an erring conscience taking that for God's command which is not so, can never make it so; Acts xxvi. 9. It may be discerned by,

(1.) Its disproportionableness, making men more strict in these things, than they are in the things unquestionably commanded of God; Matth. xxiii. 25. Nature is always fond of its own brats; and will treat them as one does his own children, while uncontroverted duties are treated like step-children; even as the earth gives its strength to the weeds, while the flowers have much ado to fend.

(2.) Its justling out some substantial duties of religion; Matth. xv. 2—6. So the apostle teaches that the spurious strictness of some clashed with the sixth command; Col. ii. 22, 23. No duty can be contrary to another. When therefore some point of strictness clashes with some moral duty of the ten commands, carrying one off from it, be sure it is strictness of the wrong sort. Thus while men's strictness bars them from the ordinary means of grace, in which Christ feeds his people, and from the duties of love and beneficence towards their neighbours, we may be sure it is spurious.

3. *Lastly*, Its giving a set to men's spirits quite unlike the spirit of the gospel. Spurious strictness ariseth from a legal disposition, and gives the spirit a legal set and bias, reckoning highly on their strictness; Phil. iii. 6, 7. It puffs up with pride and self-conceit; Col. ii. 18, fills with bitterness of spirit: Tit. iii. 3, and gives a fireiness of spirit, inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, which is a spirit of love and meekness: Jam iii. 17. This strictness is to be

avoided, as dishonouring to God, injurious to one's own soul, and hurtful to our neighbours.

2. But there is a genuine strictness for all that, the which is recommended in our text. And it is a strict walking up to the revealed will of God, so far as we know it, in all things; not daring to come and go on these points, but sticking close to them, though to our loss in the world; being inflexible in them, over the belly of temptations, the world's contrary example, its fairest smiles, and bitterest frowns.

What girds the man here, and makes him inflexible, is, the authority of God on his conscience; Acts iv. 19, 20. Wherefore, be the thing in itself never so small, and the loss or hazard in cleaving to it never so great; yet being commanded of God, he must stick to his point. It is enough to him; Psalm cxix. 4, "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently."

There is a twofold measure of this strictness; and all that is in or over it, is condemnable as looseness.

1. The law of God, the law of the ten commandments; James i. 25; Ezek. xviii. 5—9. That is the eternal rule of righteousness, which no circumstances whatsoever can make cease to bind. What in our practice comes short of that, whether with respect to our duty to God, ourselves, or neighbour, is a defect of true strictness, and what is over, is spurious strictness, unacceptable to God; for there is no wisdom in being wise above what is written.

2. The example of Christ; 1 Pet. ii. 21. Herein we have the former set before our eyes, that we may the more clearly discern it, and find it the more powerfully enforced. Our Lord Jesus was in his life the perfect pattern of true strictness; 1 Pet. ii. 22. He was indeed, by a spuriously-strict generation of legalists, accused as not strict enough, because he observed not the traditions of the elders, would not go to their heights to refuse tribute to Cæsar, scrupled not the society of publicans and sinners, that he might do good to their souls, nor to make clay on the Sabbath-day to advance a moral duty of the sixth command. But in all these things he was the strict party, walking closely up to the law of God; they were the loose party, as going aside from it. And so will they be found, who, under pretence of strictness, bind up themselves from those things wherein they have his example to follow. The closer we are to Christ's example, the more truly strict are we.

This strictness may be discerned by,

1. The uniformity of it, Psalm cxix. 6. Truly strict in one, strict in all, James ii. 11. For a man to pretend to be strict in some opinions, and loose in his practice; strict in duty to God, but loose

in duty to man, is abominable. The truly strict will be a strict observer of his words and thoughts as well as his actions; of his relative duties to man, as a parent, child, master, servant, &c.; as well as of religious duties to God, praying, reading, &c.; of truth between man and man, as well as of the truth of religious principles.

2. The due proportion kept in it, proportioning the concern to the weight of the matters. The neglect of this is taxed; Matth. xxiii. 23, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." As the least filing of gold is gold; yet the greater the weight the more is the worth, and ought to be the concern for it. So though no revealed truth, nor commanded duty is to be slighted; yet religion and reason say that according to their weight and worth our concern for them should be regulated. And it is as absurd to let our zeal run out so on circumstantial truths, as to swallow up our concern for fundamentals; to show more concern about ceremonial duties, than the substantial duties of morality; as it is to guard the feet and legs, and to leave the heart open to the sword of the enemy.

3. *Lastly*, The gospel-spirit wherewith it is managed, Phil. iii. 3. True strictness ariseth from faith in Christ in the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 14, 15. So the man walks strictly, as if he were to win heaven by his strictness; meanwhile he quits it all in point of confidence, as if God had not required it. Hence true strictness is always attended with a gospel set of spirit; whereby the man is jointly concerned for the honour of the holy law, and of the grace of the gospel; is adorned with self-denial, humility, meekness, love to God, and love to mankind, good-will and beneficence to his fellow creatures.

Now, the true notion of strictness thus stated,

1st, It is altogether justifiable, however it is run down in the world, and looked on with an evil eye. To justify it, consider,

1. The infinite majesty of God, whose commands are here strictly stuck to, Exod. xx. 2. Will any man come and go upon his prince's orders given him, whatever he do with what he is bid by others? The infinite distance betwixt God and us, fully justifies a precise regard to all his commands, an inflexible adhering thereto in every point, though the whole world should countermand them. And were it duly considered, it would oblige to exactness of obedience without disputing, without shifting, Acts iv. 19.

2. The risk that is run by tampering in these matters, Matth. x. 28. Let the matter be weighed in an even balance; put the greatest loss and hazard in the world in the one scale, to bring off from

strictness; the displeasure of God must be laid in the other; and is not that sufficient to downweigh the former, and to determine a wise man to the side of strictness. So, as long as God's frowns are more terrible than the world's, religious strictness will be justifiable.

3. The life of Christ in the world. Was it a strict life or not? It certainly was; for he could say, "I do always those things that please the Father," John viii. 29. Was it justifiable or not? Was he to be condemned as too precise? If his life was justifiable, how can they be condemned for strictness, who make it their pattern? especially considering, that he left us an example to follow, and that they do not fully come up to the strictness of it. Truly the wounds the carnal world give to the strictness of Christians, go through their sides to Christ himself, who was vastly stricter than they can reach; and they will reckon for them; Jude ver. 15.

4. Man's state of perfection. Every being is allowed to aspire towards its perfection; and shall it be a crime in a man to aspire towards his? Now, man's perfection lies in the religious strictness described before. This appears from this, that the glory of God is the chief end of man, and man glorifies God by conforming to his law, the eternal rule of righteousness; so that the more exact that conformity is, the more does he reach that end; and when he is arrived at a fully strict conformity to it, then he is at his perfection. This was the road God set innocent Adam on, who fell by letting down his strictness. This is the point the glorified saints in heaven are arrived at, where there is perfect strictness, without the least deviation. How then comes strictness to be so treated in the world? Are they angry that some endeavour to get out of their ruins, going, though, alas! slowly, in the way towards their perfection?

2*dly*, It is not only justifiable, but necessary,

1. In respect of the command of God; Psalm cxix. 4, "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently," [*Heb.* exceedingly;] *q. d.* to a degree, a pitch of exactness. And what that is, we see, Mark xii. 30, 31, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The apostle wills Christians "to walk circumspectly;" Eph. v. 15. [*Gr.* exactly, nicely, precisely;] *q. d.* going up to the utmost of every thing. The pure law requires the utmost purity and exactness; and it is blasphemy to think or say, that Christ has relaxed any thing of the purity required in every command. Therefore strictness is as necessary as the authority of God can make it.

2. In respect of its being commanded on our utmost peril; Matth.

v. 19, 20, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Should we leave ourselves loose in any one point, we risk our salvation, as the ship does sinking wherein one leak is left unstopped, ver. 29. No length of time will excuse our giving ourselves the loose; Matth. xxiv. 13, nor no hazard in the world whatsoever; Mark viii. 38.

3. In respect of our necessary conformation to Christ; 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." How necessary it is that we be conformed to Christ, the apostle teaches; Rom. viii. 29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Our baptism shews it; Gal. iii. 27, "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ." And that we cannot be if we are not strict in religion. By a loose, careless course, we carry the image of the first Adam; and by a strict course of life, we must bear the image of the second Adam.

4. *Lastly*, As an evidence and character of sincerity; Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." The reason hereof is manifest from James ii. 10, 11, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." For if any command is respected as the command of God, all his commands will be so; since they all bear the impress of the same divine authority. And one's taking it on him to come and go on God's commands, is an evidence that God's authority has no due weight with him. See the touchstone of sincerity; John xv. 14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

I shall give you the following advices for true strictness in religion.

1. Begin your strictness at the right end, in entering the strait gate by a sound conversion; Luke xiii. 24. Unconverted strict folk their case is most hopeless; Matth. xxi. 31, 32. Solomon gives the reason; Prov. xxvi. 12, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

2. Set before your eyes the true rule of strictness, namely, the

law of God and the example of Christ. The constitutions of churches, opinions, practices, and examples of parties getting the room of these, have in all ages bred much spurious strictness. But "to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. If we be Christians, let Christ's example be our rule.

3. Put on the bands of true strictness, being impressed habitually with the authority of God on your consciences, and the constraining love of Christ in your hearts. These are the straitening bands of God's making; Exod. xx. 2, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

4. Be well apprized of the matter of true strictness. It lies only in things wherein God has bound us up, not in things wherein we bind up ourselves without his authority. And ye may know it by these two marks:

(1.) It bears hard on the natural inclination and lusts of the heart. These find themselves straitened by the band; Matth. v. 29, "If thy right eye offend thee puck it out," &c. Whereas spurious strictness is agreeable to these, and feeds and nourishes them. So the former is difficult, the latter is easy to the natural man. What an easy thing is it to maintain a strict opinion, to separate from a church, when there is no hazard? But to maintain a strict practice in the substantial duties of religion, to separate from the unregenerate carnal world in one's state and frame of life, is not easy.

(2.) It is a promoter of sanctification of the soul, and makes one a better man, advancing the strength of grace, and conformity to the image of God in the whole man; Rom. xiv. 17. What the better were the Pharisees that they would not eat with unwashed hands, nor go near publicans and sinners? How much more may strictness be known to be trifling and spurious, that has a native tendency to bring leanness on the soul?

5. *Lastly*, Be strict in the faith and a holy life. And,

(1.) Let every truth be dear to you, sticking to it on all hazards, without giving up with it; Prov. xxiii. 23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." For none of the truths of God, but are more precious than all we have to lose for them. But it is a weakness to think that there is no keeping of the truth without breaking of the peace with them that differ; Rom. xiv. 14, compared with ver. 3; Phil. iii. 15, 16, while the foundation-truths remain for the bond of it.

(2.) Be strict in inquiring into sin and duty in particular cases, habitually; Prov. iii. 6. Ye profess to take Christ for your leader; then consult him in all things, that ye may know what he calls you

to by his word and providence. That is a strict man that observes the motions of the pillar of cloud and fire, and its rests, that he may move thereby or rest.

(3.) Act in all things by a religious principle; Col. iii. 17; 1 Cor. x. 31. Since the law of God is a perfect rule, it cannot but reach all human actions; either by particular precepts, or general ones, such as Phil. iv. 8, and these reaching temporal as well as spiritual matters. It is true strictness then to act so.

(4.) Never consider for your practice, whether a thing be but a little sin or a great one. If it be a sin at all, avoid it, tamper not with it; 1 Thess. v. 22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Jude ver. 23, "Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Be it never so little, it will leave a great stain on the soul; which, if not purged by the blood of Christ, will drown it in perdition. And little sins make way for greater.

(5.) In doubtful practices, wherein ye are not clear, choose always the side safest for the conscience, whatever there be to draw you to the other. If there is a case wherein ye are not sure whether the doing of such a thing is sinful or not, ye are sure there will be no sin in forbearing it? Then let it alone; Rom. xiv. 5, 23.

(6.) Be strict observers of your duty to God, in all the instances thereof required in the first table. Do not make light of dropping a duty now and then, a prayer in secret, or in your family, a sermon, &c. The case and loss of Thomas deserves consideration here; John. xx. 24, 25, "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." If providence bars you from it, it is not you that drop it, but God ceaseth to require it.

(7.) Be pointed and nice in your duty to man, in all the instances thereof required in the second table. Remember the flaw in the Pharisees' strictness; Matth. xxiii. 23. Walk precisely by the rules of justice towards others; being readier to quit a halfpenny to them, than to keep two pennies off them, as ye would rather abide a stress by cold, than take a burning coal into your bosom. Be just and faithful in your business, whatever it is, as knowing that whatever is gained by unfaithfully-done business, is unjustly got, and stolen with you. Stick precisely to truth, hate and despise lying. Loose talkers, that have not a strict regard to truth in common life, whatever regard they pretend to divine truths, are and shall have their part with the abominable; Rev. xxi. 8. More particularly,

(8.) Be conscientiously strict in the duties of your relations, as knowing your relational stations are those wherein God has set you for the time, to take trial of you. If ye are a parent or child, a husband or wife, a master or servant, closely live up to the duties of your relation; and let your strictness be of a piece, and let not a *but* fall in your relation; a very good man or woman, *but* a tyrannical husband, &c. And where undutifulness of your relatives mar the exercise of softer principles, learn to act by a principle of justice and reason.

(9.) Have a strict and awful regard to the character of superiority that God has given to any over you; for that superiority is a piece of the divine image. It is looseness of conscience, not true strictness, that takes away all sense of that, and allows no regard to them that bear it, unless their personal character be winning; that is in effect, they will regard them for their own sake but not for God's sake; Jude ver. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 18.

(10.) Be the same in secret as in public. Let your strictness take place where no eye sees but God's, as well as where the world's eye is on you; for if it be of the right stamp, it will be so; Acts xxiv. 16. For the law and conscience are the same, and God is the same in secret as before men; and if you are not the same, you are strict only to be noticed by men.

(11.) *Lastly.* Be strict observers of your own heart, as well as your life; Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." If ye be never so strict in your outward man, it will be loathsome hypocrisy if the inner man is not watched; Matth. xxiii. 27, 28; Rom. ii. 29.

Thus ordering your life, ye will be persons of Christian strictness, whom Christ will own, and which he will approve at the last day, when the looseness of the world, and their spurious strictness, will both appear naught.

Doctrine V. *Last.* Few of mankind find the strait gate, and narrow way leading to life.

In discoursing this subject, I shall,

I. Explain the doctrine.

II. Confirm it.

III. Give the reasons of it.

IV. *Lastly,* Apply.

I. To explain this point, we shall, 1. Consider how few find the strait gate and narrow way. 2. Show in what respects they are few.

*First.* We shall consider how few find the strait gate and nar-

row way. And it may be taken up as importing these three following:

1. All are naturally off from it, Rom. iii. 23. Mankind was carried off from it in Adam, even all of them to a man, ver. 12. And man's natural state is a state of wandering, wandering on the mountains of vanity, in the wilderness, like lost sheep, straying passengers; and behold the end of their course, Prov. xxi. 16, "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding, shall remain in the congregation of the dead."

2. It is not easily found out by any, 1 Pet. iv. 18. In all cases the best things are hardest to reach; so while the wide gate and broad way are fallen on with all ease, the strait gate and narrow way are a darned road that one cannot easily light on. We are so liable to passions, prejudices, and misapprehensions about it, it is so far above our natural capacities, that there is no finding it out without the Spirit of Christ pointing it out to us effectually.

3. It is but few that discover it, so as on good grounds to be able to say, This is it. There are so many false gates and ways, that seem to be it, but are not, that they are rare persons who are not deceived by one or other of them.

4. Few enter by the strait gate, and travel the narrow way, though there is no other passage for sinners unto life. It is a gate and way but little frequented. It is not many that are brought within sight of them; but of these many draw back, and but few enter and go on. There are but few regenerate persons, sound converts, truly holy ones, in the world. The most part go in the way of sin, few in the way of holy obedience, walking in Christ, in the way of God's commandments.

5. *Lastly*, Howbeit there are some that do enter by that gate, and travel that way. In the worst of times there are always some sound converts, truly holy in the world, and will be to the end, Matth. xvi. 18. When their number is completed, few as they are, the world will be at an end.

*Secondly*, In what respects are they few?

1. They are not few absolutely, or considered in themselves. If we consider the general assembly of them, Heb. xii. 23, them that have, do, and shall find it, they are a goodly company. They are a great multitude, so great that they pass all human numbering, Rev. viii. 9; they are so many, that they are like the stars, innumerable, Gen. xv. 5, compared with Gal. iii. 29. The shed blood of a Saviour springs up in an innumerable issue.

They are upon the way but by parcels, being like an army who began their march at the sounding of the march, (Gen. iii. 15.) to the heavenly city, have continued it all along since that time to this

day, and will continue it yet for a time, viz., to the end of the world. It is now four thousand years and more, since the van, the first generation, ended their march, and were settled in the city, the righteous Abel being the first man that entered it; and since that time all along the following have been entering in their order. There is a part of that host now upon the way, advancing to the city; but the rear is not as yet begun to move. They that are upon the way at a time, are in different nations and parts of the earth; they in the same country are often but few of them together upon one spot. Hence speaking what they see and feel, their mouths are filled with such complaints of solitude as these; Psalm xii. 1, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." Mic. vii. 1, "Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage." But stay till the whole host have finished their march, and appear in one body in the heavenly city, they will be there such a vast multitude as no man can number, but the man Christ their captain, whose understanding is infinite, because he is God.

Let not the fewness of them that find it, frighten any from it, because they cannot think of being solitary, wanting much company. For it is but for a little by the way that they will be tried with solitariness. They that live godly in the lonliest abode, shall ere long be for ever in a glorious throng, where they will have glorious company.

2. They are, nevertheless, few comparatively, in comparison with those that, entering by the wide gate, go the broad way. Though considered by themselves, they are a great multitude, yet compared with them in number, they fall far short of them. The regenerate are few in comparison with the unregenerate, sound converts with the unconverted, the truly holy with the unholy, saints with sinners, those that find the strait gate with those entering the wide gate.

II. To confirm this heavy truth, we shall take a twofold view to clear it. 1. A view of the scripture-account of this matter. 2. A view of the world.

*First*, We shall take a view of the scripture-account of this matter.

1. Our Lord expressly tells us, that of the many called few are chosen, Matth. xx. 16, and xxii. 14. Now, all those that enter the strait gate, and are on the narrow way, are chosen, Rev. xvii. 14. Faith is the faith of God's elect, Tit. i. 1, and they only are brought unto holy obedience, 1 Pet. i. 2. All the elect are called, Rom. viii. 30. But all the called externally by the Gospel

are not elect or chosen; on the contrary, many are called that way, and but few chosen; so that of those to whom the Gospel-call comes, there are but few chosen and brought in by the strait gate to the narrow way; the multitude of them still wander. And then many are not even externally called.

2. Christ's flock is of those, who, entering by the strait gate, go the narrow way, following him, John x. 27, Cant i. 8. But his flock is a very little one, viz., in comparison of the devil's drove; Luke xii. 32, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In vain will one pretend to restrict that to the disciples or believers then present; since it agrees to all his to the end of the world, verse 35—40. His children are comparatively so few in the world, that they are for signs and wonders; Isa. viii. 18, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel." A certain evidence that they are very rare. And that this is meant of Christ is clear, from Heb. ii. 13, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." Israel was a typical people, chosen out of the world, few in comparison of the rest of the world; and Christ's flock are his Israel.

3. The scripture represents them under such terms as respect a greater multitude from whom they are distinguished. They are the first-born, Heb. xii. 23; and how few the first-born are in comparison of other children, every body knows, being but one of each family, even of the most numerous families: the first fruits, Rev. xiv. 4, James i. 18. But how small are these in comparison with the whole harvest? So the Scripture-account states them but few.

*Secondly*, Let us take a view of the world. In whatever period we cast our eye on it, we will find that still the broad-way men were the multitude, the other the few.

1. The generation before the flood was such. Good men were rare in it, but evil men abounded exceedingly. What a character have they? Gen. vi. 11, 12, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." And the flood sweeping all away but eight persons, clears it demonstratively, that there were very few, if any, godly among them. The apostle calls them the world of the ungodly, 2 Pet. ii. 5.

2. From the flood to the calling of Abraham, how few were good men! That mighty apostacy, headed by Nimrod, who with his followers built the tower of Babel, demonstrates this, Gen xi.; they being such a vast company, that they were divided into many na-

tions, with the confusion of their languages, while the original holy tongue remained with the race of Shem, that had no hand in that rebellion against Heaven; as it did also, I think, with the Canaanites that were engaged in it. But then even Shem's race was fearfully degenerate when Abraham was called; Josh. xxiv. 2.

3. From Abraham to Moses, what a doleful case was the world in, sunk in idolatry and profanity! I will by no means say, that in these days there was no true religion or godliness, but in Abraham's family; Melchizedec, Ishmael, &c., were good men; but certainly they were very few in these days; ten could not be found in Sodom. In Jacob's family itself Rachel had stolen her father's images, Jacob had occasion to purge his household of strange gods. How low was religion sunk, even with them, while they were in Egypt? See Ezek. xx. 6—8, Rom. v. 13.

4. From Moses to Christ, or from the erecting of the Jewish Church, and all along under the law, till the setting up of the Gospel-kingdom among the Gentiles, by the apostles, making the New Testament church, there was the same face of affairs in the world. The ceremonial law was the hedge of the church, separating her from all other societies, and enclosing her among the Jews, and the few proselytes that came to her from among the nations. The rest of the nations in the world at that time were sunk in idolatry, ignorant of the true God, and the acceptable way of worshiping him, Acts xiv. 15, 16. And what a figure made the Jewish church generally during that time, at every turn going off to idolatry, profanity spreading, formality prevailing, may be learned from their prophets, whom from time to time they murdered, till at length they murdered the Lord of glory, Matth. xxiii. 31, 32, Acts vii. 52. How few was the number of the truly godly even among them in all ages? What a heavy life had Moses among them? David complains, Psalm xii. 1, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." Isa. chap. i. 9, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Jeremiah, chap. ix. 2, "Oh! that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them; for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." Micah, chap. vii. 1, "Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleaning of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe fruit."

5. From the setting up of the New Testament church till the grand apostasy under Antichrist, the narrow way was still trode by

few in comparison; as is evident from the accounts we have in the New Testament, the persecutions everywhere raised against the apostles, and the state of the churches quickly after their erection, as Corinth, Galatia, and the seven churches of Asia. For the first three hundred years Paganism continued the national established religion in the empire, and Christians were treated as slaughter-sheep. When peace was restored, and Christianity was established by law, damnable heresies broke in among them, and particularly Arianism overspread all; and the apostasy went on till it issued in the darkness and apostasy under Antichrist.

6. During the time of the reign of Antichrist, until the Reformation, a thick darkness overspread the Christian world. It so prevailed that "all the world wondered at the beast," Rev. xiii. 3, that is, the Christians, and particularly the European world. Those on the narrow way were so few, that they were represented by two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth; Rev. xi. 3.

7. *Lastly*, From the Reformation to this day, is the last period the world has yet seen, and that we account our own times; which, howsoever they have increased the number of the ungodly, beyond what they were before the Reformation, yet afford but a melancholy view of the fewness of them on the narrow way. For,

1. There is not a third part of the world that professes Christianity at this day; so that were they all godly that are baptized, and profess the name of Christ, they would be but few. Nay, it is reckoned, that dividing the world into thirty parts, nineteen of these are inhabited by Pagans, who know not the true God; six by Jews and Mahometans, who reject Christ, not acknowledging him the Saviour of the world. So five only of thirty remain professing Christianity.

2. Of these five, two are reckoned of the communion of the Greek church, who have a very miserable face of Christianity among them; denying the souls of the faithful departed to be admitted to the beatific vision till after the resurrection; praying for the dead; admitting children at seven years of age to the supper, thinking they then begin to sin; adorning their churches with pictures; ministers and people sunk in gross ignorance. The other remaining three parts are divided between the Popish and the Protestant churches, the former being idolaters and Antichristian.

3. *Lastly*, In the Protestant churches there are but few that appear to be on the narrow way, in comparison of those therein on the broad way. There are multitudes that are, according to the scripture, to be cast out of that happy number; such as,

1. Gross heretics, sunk in fundamental errors, denying the impu-

tation of Christ's righteousness, his satisfaction, his Godhead, blaspheming the holy Trinity. Of which sort not a few are to be found in the Protestant churches; not to mention the deists, who regard neither Christ nor Antichrist, rejecting the bible and the gospel by the lump. These surely are none of the number; Gal. v. 19—21, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Jude verse 4, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. The grossly ignorant. What swarms of these are to be found in the churches, who have no tolerable measure of the fundamental principles? We may, by observing how many such are among those on whom pains are taken to instruct them, guess how they abound in countries and congregations where no tolerable care is taken of that matter. So that the bulk of people in many places are careless about and quite rude in these things. Now, "it is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour," Isaiah xxvii. 11.

4. The profane, who are openly vicious in their lives, walking in the broad way with a witness. These everywhere abound, having nothing of Christianity but the name, are a public nuisance to society, and therefore a scandal to the Christian profession; which has no doubt contributed to the bringing of Christianity under contempt; Gal. v. 19—21, forecited.

4. Mere moralists, who lead a civil life in the world, as good neighbours in society, but worship not God, if it is not in the public congregations, and have not so much as a form of godliness. These also must be cast out; Matth. v. 20, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

5. *Lastly*, Naughty professors of religion, such as,

1. Those who are a scandal to a profession, by their habitual course of untenderness of life. They will talk of religion, but in their walk there is nothing of it to be seen. They will go about religious duties, but then their tongues, hands, and feet go at random all the rest of their time, as if they did these to get leave to walk

licentiously, as was the case with the whore; Prov. vii. 14, 15, "I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee."

2. They who, though they are regular in the most of their way, yet vent their naughtiness in some one or other scandalous practice, hanging about them, such as injustice, lying, evil speaking, intolerable pride and self-conceit, deceitfulness, &c. This makes secret disgusts among professors, alienating their affections; Matth. v. 19.

3. Those who are as blameless in the outward man, as human frailty permits; yet still retain some idol or idols of jealousy in the heart, and never come to a sincere compliance with the whole will of God revealed to them; Psalm lxvi. 18, and cxix. 6.

4. *Lastly*, Unexperienced professors, strangers to the work of grace on their hearts, and the life of God in their souls; who have no experience of converting, regenerating grace; and no acquaintance with the life of faith, the spiritual combat, and communion with God in duties; John iii. 3. 2 Tim. iii. 5.

Cast out these, how few do remain! So it is evident as the light that few of mankind find the strait gate and narrow way leading to life.

III. I shall give the reasons of the point: or, whence it is that few find the strait gate and narrow way. It ariseth from,

1. The natural blindness of men's minds; Eph. iv. 17, 18. They cannot discern it in its heavenly excellency, beauty, and glory; 1 Cor. ii. 14. They hear of it, and are pointed to it, but their eyes are held that they cannot see it nor find it, as the Sodomites about the walls of Lot's house. And till the eyes of one's understanding are opened by the Spirit, he will never take it up; and that is the privilege of few; Isa. liii. 1. Human learning, wit, and sense, avail not here.

2. The perverseness of men's wills; John v. 40. Men naturally have a listlessness for it; they care not for it, therefore they do not find it. Nay, they have an aversion to it, their hearts are set against it; Rom. viii. 7. And till the will be renewed, they will never come on the narrow way. A day of power, the mercy of few, is necessary to bring them to it; Psalm cx. 3. And when the Spirit is at work with them for that end, they struggle against it like a hooked fish in the water.

3. The natural bent, propensity, and attachment, to the broad way. That is the way of men's own hearts, as the way of water is to go down, not up the brae; so that let them alone, they would never choose, desire, nor seek another, Isa. lvii. 17, and in the

depth of sovereign wisdom the multitude is let alone; they get their will with a vengeance. They will have head; Job xxi. 14, and get it; Hos. iv. 17.

4. Satan is busy to keep them off from it; 1 Pet. v. 8. He is the great seducer, who bewilders sinners, leading them into byeways, according to their different tempers and dispositions. He represents the narrow way in frightful colours, the broad way as pleasant and safe; so fills them with prejudices against the former, and in favour of the latter. And if at any time a sinner is like to enter the strait gate into the narrow way, he doubles his diligence, and plies him closely to keep him off from it.

5. *Lastly*, Ill example falling in with the natural inclination, carries all headlong before it; Matth. xviii. 7. There is some good example too in the world; but then it goes against the stream of the natural inclination, and so proves ineffectual. But ill example, going with the stream, easily prevails; men are apt to promise themselves peace in an evil way, on which they see others going, and enjoying peace too.

Use 1. of Information. Hence learn,

1. Most of mankind then must perish, since there is no getting to life but through the strait gate and narrow way, which few find. Proud men, from a conceit of their own excellency, cannot admit this, that God will cast away the most part; but the fallen angels were of greater excellency of nature than men; yet he casts them all away, saves none of them. They see not the consistency of it with his mercy; but mercy must be regulated with justice, otherwise it is a softness unbecoming the Judge of all the earth; and mercy will have its triumph in saving some, even all that take the way for it consistent with justice. They say, that then Adam will be more prevalent to ruin, than Christ to save; but it is more to save one sinner, than to ruin thousands, yea a world.

2. Saints then must needs be a singular kind of persons in the world, having a way of their own different from that the multitude go in; for they are few that find the narrow way. This cannot miss to make them look an odd sort of folk, fantastic, and humorous in the eyes of the world, Isa. viii. 18, 1 Pet. i. 4. And whoso cannot digest that character from the world's hand, but must needs, for preserving their reputation, conform to the world, and the way in vogue with the multitude, are not fit for heaven. They are the fearful, Rev. xxi. 8, deniers of Christ, Matth. x. 33, as ashamed of him, Mark viii. 38.

3. No wonder the interests of religion be low in the world: it has few cordial followers. Truth falls in the streets, and holiness of

heart and life is rare; both are unfashionable, the guise of the world lies contrary to both; for few find the narrow way. That religion is greatly run down, sometimes persecuted, always mocked and maligned, cannot miss, while the state of matters is such that few find the narrow way.

4. *Lastly*, Then certainly it is not easy to be a Christian, to fall on the strait gate and narrow way. The unconcernedness and carelessness of men about religion, as if they could hardly go wrong in that matter, is unaccountable. Can it rationally be thought an easy thing to hit that mark which the most part miss? to find that way which but few of mankind do find? But that fond conceit of the easiness of finding it, is one great reason why so few find it.

Use 2. Of Exhortation. And,

1*st*, Let all consider well and examine what way it is they are on. Ask yourselves, Am I on the broad way, or on the narrow? and endeavour to be clear as to that concerning point.

Motive 1. This is a point of the utmost concern to you; death and life hang upon it. If ye are on the broad way, you are on the road to destruction, if on the narrow way, on the road to life. And will ye be careless as to such a weighty point? will ye not do your own souls the justice to consider of it?

Motive 2. It is certain ye were once on the broad way, Eph. ii. 3. The only question competent here, is, Whether ye are brought off from it into the narrow way, or not? If ye never saw yourselves on it, it is a sad token ye are on it still, though ye perceive it not; Rev. iii. 17, 18. Though your eyes have been opened to see yourselves on it, and your danger on it, it is a question for all that, Whether ye are brought off it, or not?

Motive 3. The most part are on the broad way, few have found the narrow one. Ye have the more need to consider which of them ye are on. If many had found, few missed the narrow way; yet since there are any who miss it, the matter being of such weight, might oblige you to put it to the trial as to yourselves; much more ought ye to put it to the trial, when they are so few that find the narrow way, and so many miss it.

Motive 4. There are many ways taken for the narrow way, that are not it; and self-deceiving is rife in the world; Prov. xxi. 2, and none more confident than the fool, chap. xii. 15. Therefore try your way, ere ye trust it.

Motive 5. *Lastly*, It will be a fearful disappointment the careless sinner will meet with at last, a frightful awakening the sleepy thoughtless sinner will get, falling into destruction at the end of his way; Matth. xxv. 11, 12, "Afterward came also the other virgins,

saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Isa. l. 11. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; this shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." Awake therefore in time, and consider your way ere it be too late.

After what has been said on both the ways, I will only add two things.

1. If ye are on the narrow way, ye have entered by the strait gate of conversion to God; Matth. xviii. 3; ye have felt the bitterness of sin, and therein the bitterness of death; have been brought freely away out of yourselves to Christ by faith, and through him unto God by a sincere repentance.

2. If ye are on the narrow way, ye feel the narrowness of it, yet are resolute not to leave it, but go through with it; and so your life is a continued struggle; Phil. iii. 14. The commands of God are your rule, the example of Christ your pattern, the will of God the reason of your walk, the honouring of God the end and design of your life, and the Christ of God the fountain of your strength for the way.

2*dly* Ye who are not yet on the narrow way, set yourselves to find it; use your utmost endeavours to get at it by the strait gate, for otherwise there is no reaching it. And,

1. Be not easy without, but seek to experience a work of sound conversion on your souls. Pray for it, hear the word for it, and muse on your own case for it, admitting conviction and cherishing it; labouring to get such a sight of Christ in his glory and beauty, as may lead you to thorough repentance.

2. Set yourselves for a life of holy obedience, following the footsteps of Christ himself, and the footsteps of the flock. Apply yourselves to the way of mortification, dying to the creature and to sin daily; to the way of newness of life, living to God in opposition to the creature, to righteousness in opposition to sin.

3*dly*, *Lastly*, Ye who are on the narrow way,

1. Bless God for it, and be thankful, that while he reveals it to few, he has revealed it to you; that ye are among the few, and not among the many.

2. Walk circumspectly. Satan will be laying snares for you, that ye may stumble and fall, and if possible to get you off from it. The fewer are on it, the world notices them the more, ready to improve their wrong steps to the dishonour of the way. The greater will your sin be, if ye walk not worthy of such a rare privilege.

3. Walk on resolutely, however narrow and straitening the way be to you; for it leads to life; and the broad way, however easy, to death and destruction.

## THE DUTY AND ADVANTAGE OF CLEAVING TO THE LORD AND HIS WAY, IN A DECLINING TIME.*

GEN. vi. 9,

*Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations.*

IN the two preceding verses we have the destruction of the old world determined, ver. 7, and the preservation of Noah by special favour secured, ver. 8. When that generation for their sins was to be swept away by a deluge, Noah is God's favourite, safety and protection from the common stroke is determined for him. Hereupon a question natively ariseth, O what sort of a man was Noah, who was so highly favoured? It is answered in the words of the text, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations." Wherein we have,

1. Noah's character; he "was perfect;" not legally, but evangelically. He was a man of integrity, downright for God; not following the wisdom and way of the world, but studying in all things to approve himself to God. This character of his is raised, from the consideration of the time wherein he lived, "He was perfect in his generations;" in the generation before the flood, and the generation after it. The former was a generation of general corruption, ver. 12, wherein the speat of wickedness and apostasy ran so high, that it carried all before it; yet even in such a time Noah kept his feet, and made his way against the stream, though he was very singular. This is the man that finds favour with God in a day of wrath against the generation, that is safe while others are swept away in the anger of God.

2. How Noah came to reach such a character; "He was a just man." It refers not to his life; for the perfection or integrity ascribed to him comprehends all in that point; but to his state; he was a justified man, justified before God by faith in the promise; Gen. iii. 15. For so runs the original, "Noah a just man was perfect," &c. Noah held by the righteousness of faith for himself, and preached

* A sermon preached on a day of solemn fasting and humiliation, at Ettrick, June 14, 1722.

it to others, as we learn from Heb. xi. 7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." 2 Pet. ii. 5, "God spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." And not only so, but he taught and practised the righteousness of a holy life; while that generation, slighting the faith of the promise, and going off from the doctrine of free grace therein held forth, to acceptance by works, after the example of Cain, Gen. iv. 5, ran into all immorality, and casting off of good works, in their practice, till they were swept off the earth for their loose lives; which is the native consequent of legality. There were others, I doubt not, besides Noah, justified persons in that generation, and holy too; at least Methuselah, who died in the year of the deluge, and Shem, Noah's son; but this is added concerning Noah, that he "was a just man," to shew that he could not have attained that excellency in his generation, but that he was justified by faith; the promise being the only channel of the conveyance of grace.

Two doctrines are deducible from the words.

Doctrine I. In the most declining generation, wherein sin and wickedness come to the greatest height, God has still some, though few, that retain their integrity, and cleave to him and his ways.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall,

I. Evince the truth of the point.

II. Shew how it is that the declining of a generation comes to be so very general, that so very few are left retaining their integrity.

III. Why some, though few, are still left retaining their integrity in such a generation.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall evince the truth of this, That in the most declining generation, wherein sin and wickedness come to the greatest height, God has still some, though few, that retain their integrity, and cleave to him and his ways." It has been found so in all ages of the church. In the old world there was a Noah; in Sodom a Lot; among the children of Israel in Egypt a Moses, who all retained their integrity, and cleaved to the Lord and his ways. Of Moses it is said, Heb. xi. 24—26, that "when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the re-

compense of the reward." There was a Caleb and a Joshua in the generation in the wilderness; in Elijah's days "seven thousand;" in Isaiah's days "a small remnant;" Isa. i. 9, and likewise "a remnant" in Jeremiah's days; Jer. xv. 11. In the Jewish apostasy under Antiochus, there were some that were tortured for the cause of God, and refused to "accept of deliverance" on sinful terms; Heb. xi. 35. When Christ came into the world, there were some "waiting for the consolation of Israel;" and when the Jewish nation was ruined at the destruction of Jerusalem, there was "a remnant according to the election of grace." In the grand apostasy under the New Testament, there were still "two witnesses" left; Rev. ix.

II. How is it that the declining of a generation comes to be so very general, that so very few are left retaining their integrity, that they may be for signs and wonders in the day wherein they live?

1. The corruption of human nature is the spring-head of it; Gen. vi. 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In the most favourable times for religion, in the most advantageous circumstances men can be placed in, man's nature has still a strong bias to the wrong side; therefore no wonder, that whatever set a church or people get at sometimes towards religion, they do through time decline and go all wrong, according to the natural bias.

2. No due care taken for the religious education of those who are springing up, doth notably advance it. When religion falls low among parents, and those in the place of parents having the training up of youth in their hands, it can hardly miss to sink among the children and youth; so that if the one be bad, the other must needs be worse, but where sovereign grace interposes, and hinders the native effect of the neglect and ill example. And here is one of the manifest causes of the declining of religion in our day, in families, in parishes, and in the ministry, alas! too. The signal corrupting of the youth was one of the causes of the apostasy of the generation in Noah's days; Gen. vi. 2, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they choose."

3. Corruption of manners thus prevailing, every one serves to corrupt another, till the leaven has well nigh gone through the whole lump; Gen. vi. 12, "And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." In a time of declining, sin and wickedness is like a ball of snow rolled among snow, that still grows bigger, one piece of snow licking up another; or like the water, the farther from the head the

greater it grows, by the brooks that join it in its course. And dreadful execution is thus made three ways,

(1.) In all times there are some of no principle, that have no tincture of religion; but in respect of religion are like a sheet of white paper. These readily take on the first bad impressions, and lie a ready prey to evil counsel, and pernicious example. By this means thousands are ruined by their falling into ill hands, and in an evil time; who might have got another cast, if the stream of wickedness had not run so high in their day.

(2.) There are others who have a very slender grip of religion. They have good meanings and inclinations; but, alas! the evil day comes upon them ere they are rooted; and so the wind of an apostatizing time blowing hard, their fruit and leaf is blown off, and at length they are blown up by the root with it, and go quickly away with the stream.

(3.) Many that have the root of the matter in them, fall asleep, and let down their watch, and they are carried off their feet too; and so, though they get their souls for a prey, they lose the honour and advantage of retaining their integrity in their generation. Thus it is said of some of the Lord's people; Psalm xcix. 8, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." So Moses and Aaron, for their provocation at Meribah, died in the wilderness, with the generation that had been a snare to them; and good Eli, for the little care he had of the young priests, to train them up rightly for his Master's work, never saw the captive ark return into Israel.

4. When a generation is thus posting on in the road of apostasy from God unto ruin, the Lord usually takes home many of his own out from among them; Isa. lvii. 1, 2, "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." The good Lamech, Noah's father, died five years before the flood; and his good grandfather Methuselah died in the very year it came on. Josiah was taken away a little before the Babylonish captivity; Luther a little before the wars in Germany began; holy Rutherford died the very day before the act rescissory was passed, 1661; and a great man of God* in this church was taken away from among us in May 1720. Matters being thus, the declining goes on the faster, the pillars being removed.

5. The declining humour by these means at length so prevails,

* Mr. James Webster, one of the ministers of Edinburgh.

that it makes its way over all opposition, and gets the mastery, so as it carries all before it, like a flood. And at this height of it three things are remarkable,

(1.) Iniquity comes to be established by a law. Thus some are said to "decree unrighteous decrees, and write grievousness which they have prescribed; Isa. x. 1. The sin of the generation which began privately to set up its head, spreads, and is by degrees brought into reputation, till at length it turns truth and holiness out of their seat, and sits down in their place; and "good is called evil, and evil good;" Isa. v. 20. And then all are not only allured, but commanded to entertain it; and in such circumstances the apostasy of the generation cannot miss to make a mighty progress, like Ephraim; Hos. v. 11, "Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment; because he willingly walked after the commandment."

(2.) Shame is cast on the way of God. Thus our Lord says, that some are "ashamed of him and his words in an adulterous and sinful generation;" Mark viii. 38. And that shame drives many into the net. Then men must risk either their conscience or credit and reputation; and must either be false to God, or fools in the eyes of their generation. No doubt Noah, when he was building his ark, and the rest were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, would even be a laughing-stock to them. This is a mighty engine for corrupting man. Many whom blows would not drive from their religion, are ashamed out of it by an apostate generation pouring contempt on it.

3. The stream of the generation's favour runs on the side of the declining. True seriousness and tenderness serves only to make men overlooked, opposed, contemned, and despised; while such as can go with the multitude, are in honour and estimation, Psalm xii. throughout. The prophet Jeremiah takes notice, chap. xii. 1, that "the way of the wicked prospers," and that "they are all happy that deal very treacherously."

6, *Lastly*, What puts the copestone on the course of a generation's defection from God, and readily fills the cup to the brim, is persecution of the way of God, and of any that will dare to retain their integrity. This is the native end of a declining course, and is readily found, also, to be the full sea-mark, which when they come to, God calls them to an account for their apostasy. Lot was long vexed in Sodom: at length they made an attack upon his house, and then their ruin came on. The Jews had a long day of declining; at length they crucified Christ, and instead of embracing the Gospel, they persecuted the apostles; and so wrath came on them to the uttermost.

III. Why are some, though few, still left retaining their integrity in such a generation?

1. Because of God's faithfulness in his promise; Matth. xvi. 18, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The gates of hell may attack the church, and carry on their victory very far, but cannot prevail over her entirely. The floods may overflow her even to the neck, but shall never go quite over her head, and so utterly carry her away. Christ is ever in the midst of her; and though his attendants that cleave to him may be very few, there will always be some.

2. Because God will not leave himself without a witness in an apostatising generation. While the antichristian apostasy was going on, God would have his witnesses against them maintained, Rev. xi. 3. Such a witness for God was Noah against the old world, and by his practice as well as his preaching he condemned them, Heb. xi. 7. And this is the character of all those who in a declining day cleave to the Lord and his way; Isa. xliii. 10, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." Prov. xxviii. 4, "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them." Therefore he bears them up for their work.

3. Because therein the power of his grace appears most illustriously. That the Lord preserved a Noah in the old world deluged with wickedness, before it was overflown with water; and a Lot in Sodom, where all were so very vile, was a sort of miracle of grace, as the keeping of a candle burning in an ocean, where the waters are round about to extinguish it. There is an emphasis in that Rev. iii. 4, "Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments." There are sometimes when in some places people can hardly miss to seem good, if they be not really so; but some times there are again, wherein it is extremely hard to get the road kept in the practice of religion, the stream runs so against it.

4. *Lastly*, The Lord preserves them for a seed to better days. What should have come of the new world if Noah had not been perfect in his generation? But he served to carry the principles and practice of religion into the generation after the flood. And as long as God has a church in the world, be the times never so bad, there will still be some to cause the name of Christ to be remembered in all generations, according to that promise; Isa. vi. 13, "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return," &c.

Use 1. Whatever encouragement such have, that turn their back on the way of religion and seriousness, and take a sinful latitude to themselves from the multitude going their way, there is a witness against them still left, that will rise up in judgment against them,

and condemn them. This was the case in Noah's days; Heb. xi. 7, "By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Though iniquity is become fashionable, and the stream of it overflows all its banks in our days, there are still some who for ten thousand worlds would not take the sinful liberty to themselves that others take. And their way and practice writes death on theirs.

2. However bad the days are, let none pretend it cannot be better with them, because their lot is cast in such an evil day. The speat of wickedness never ran so high yet, as to carry all before it without exception. But there are some, who, if religion will be easy for them, will follow it; but they have no heart to strive against the stream. Such are not for heaven, especially in a declining day.

3. Be exhorted not to conform yourselves to the ways of the declining generation wherein our lot is cast; but be among the few who cleave to him and keep his way. It is hard, yet it is possible. Noah was perfect in his generation; it will be our sin and ruin if we be not so in ours. Awake, and bestir yourselves to see your state, that ye be righteous by faith; and see to your life and conversation, that ye walk with God, as Noah did. And for direction take this other doctrine.

Doctrine II. God takes special notice of them for good, who in a declining generation retain their integrity, and keep right, cleaving to him and his way in the face of a generation departing fast from him.

In discoursing this doctrine I shall shew,

I. What this rare attainment is, this perfection in such a generation; or, How men keep right, like Noah, in such a generation.

II. What are the advantages of this course, in which the Lord takes special notice for good, of those who follow it in a declining day.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. The first thing is to shew what this rare attainment is, this perfection in such a generation; or, How men keep right, like Noah, in such a generation. It is then to be,

1. Sincere, and not a hypocrite. Sincerity is Gospel perfection; and where it is wanting, nothing is accepted, as is clear from the case of Amaziah, who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart, 2 Chron. xxv. 2; and where this sincerity is, the man is accepted, notwithstanding of many imperfec-

tions, as is clear from the case of Asa, who, though the high places were not taken away, yet his heart was perfect before the Lord, chap. xv. 17. Noah was a sincere soul, else he had not got such a noble character. Hypocrisy will never carry out before the Lord; a form of godliness will be no sufficient preservative in such a generation, wherein the mask is taken off many faces, and the thoughts of many hearts made manifest.

2. Downright for God, without going aside to the ways of carnal wisdom. The apostle gives us an excellent notion of it from his own practice; 2 Cor. i. 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." The man considers what is the good and acceptable will of the Lord; and that discovered, he follows it in simplicity, without consulting with flesh and blood; reckoning it his greatest wisdom to cleave to the Lord's way, and that his greatest wisdom lies in discerning the steps of the great Leader before him. Other wisdom will be a false light.

3. Tender in one's private walk and conversation, as under the eye of the all-seeing God. This David could say from his own experience; Psalm xviii. 23, "I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." Men will in vain pretend to be perfect in their generation, by keeping a fair outside in public, while in the meantime they make no conscience of the secret life of a Christian, which the world cannot be witness to. Those that truly keep right in such a day, set themselves above all to keep their own hearts, to mortify their own lusts, and to keep up communion with God in duties; and do not satisfy themselves with a parcel of outward performances.

4. Watchful against snares and temptations, that one be not led away with them. The perfect man has his eyes in his head to discern his hazard; and his soul cries within him, "Lead us not into temptation." And he labours to stand at a distance from sin: And (1.) From the sin with which he is most easily led aside, Psalm xviii. 23; Heb. xii. 1. (2.) From the snares and sins of the time wherein he lives. He sees the snares of that sort many, as they always are in a declining time; and it is his business to keep his garments clean, Rev. iii. 4. Whatever his station is in the world, he will never think himself out of hazard of being led aside into sinful courses, while all flesh have corrupted their way.

5. Proof against ill example, which is the great engine of Satan for carrying on apostacy in such a day and generation. So was Noah in the old world, and Lot in Sodom. They who set God be-

fore them as they ought, while he bids them stand, though all the world should be moving forward, will not dare to follow. Ill example is the ruin of many in such a day. Hence saith our Lord, Matth. xxiv. 12, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

6. A mourner for the sins of others. Hence we read of some that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem, Ezek. ix. 4. And righteous Lot, while dwelling in Sodom, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with the unlawful deeds of that people, 2 Pet. ii. 8. Such a one will not think himself unconcerned in the sins of the generation wherein he lives. He sees God is dishonoured, his wrath is provoked, the souls of the sinners are thereby put in the utmost hazard, and his own soul is in hazard of being held consenting thereto. So love to God, to his neighbour, and to himself, kindles in his soul a real grief and sorrow for the sins of the generation.

7. An opposer of the sinful courses of the day and generation wherein he lives, as he hath access. Hence is that exhortation; Eph. v. 11, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." It is not enough to stand off from them ourselves; but we ought to witness against sin in others to reprove, admonish, and exhort sinners to take heed of the God-provoking courses. The Lord in such a time saith, "Who is on my side?" And we are to take part with God against a sinful, backsliding, wicked generation.

8. *Lastly*, In a word, it is to be rowing against the stream of iniquity, and endeavouring to draw the nearer God that others are going far from him; to be best when others are worst; to be the more earnest, serious, and active in real religion, the more low we see it falling in our day.

This may afford us matter of lamentation, shewing there are few perfect in our generation. (1.) Most part are under visible blemishes in their outward conversation. (2.) They that are otherwise, are asleep; they are not active for God; if they be not carried away with the stream, they do not oppose it.

II. The second thing is, to shew what are the advantages of this course, in which the Lord takes special notice for good, of those who follow it in a declining day.

1. Sweet peace of conscience in keeping the Lord's way, while others are disregarding it. Hence saith the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 12, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. Though

it is hard to row against the stream of an apostatizing generation, and may expose one to much trouble; yet there is a quietness within, a certain satisfaction that ariseth from reflecting that one is in the way of duty, and through grace gets it kept. And this will be of great value with those who by experience have learned, that inward peace is preferable to peace with all the world, and is to bebought at any rate, but sold at none. Hence saith Job, chap. xxvii. 6, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

2. Communion with God, and access to him in duties. Hence saith our Lord, John xiv. 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." As the endeavour to keep right in such a day, gives the upright soul many errands to God, and obliges him to be looking much to the Lord, whence must come his help; so the Lord even allows the soul access to him in such a case in a special manner, Rev. xi. 4; and though no works of theirs, but the blood of Jesus only is the ground of their confidence before the Lord, yet uprightness for God removes the impediments which hinder the soul's confidence. Hence saith the apostle, 1 John iii. 21, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." If any have communion with God in such a day, it shall be they. Hence saith the prophet, Micah ii. 7, "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"

3. A sweet allowance of furniture, strength, and support, for the duty called for; Prov. x. 29, "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." Sometimes the Lord calls his people to the field of battle; and unbelief says, it will not do, for they are naked and unarmed; but the call being clear, they that would keep right in an evil day, must venture forward at their Lord's beck, though naked, leaving it upon him by faith to provide them weapons when and where he will, 1 Sam. ii. 4. And then they are provided in the field of battle, if not before. Hence saith our Lord, Matth. x. 19, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." And whoever uprightly venture thus to swim against the stream, they may assure themselves the Lord will be the lifter up of their head.

4. Seasonable providential appearances for them. God has a watchful eye for good over them who keep his way; and he will

protect them in it, while he has use for them that way ; Psalm cxxi. 2, 3, " My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved ; he that keepeth thee will not slumber." They that would carry uprightly in a declining time, must lay their account to run a risk ; but it ever remains a truth ; Prov. x. 9, " He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." And whoever do uprightly appear for God in an evil day, sooner or later God will appear for them, with a favourable cast of his hand ; Prov. xvi. 7, " When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Lot was a witness against Sodom's wickedness ; and at length they make a furious attack on him and his house, but God seasonably interposeth for his rescue, Gen. xix. 9, 10, 11. Jeremiah in the road of duty was in hazard of death, but the princes rescue him, especially Ahikam, Jer. xxvi. Samuel witnesses against Israel's bent for a king ; but there was no diverting them ; the speat ran so high, that he could not stem it ; but God joined his testimony from heaven against the people's course by thunder and rain, which left a conviction in their breasts, so that they greatly feared the Lord and Samuel," 1 Sam. xii. 18.

5. *Lastly*, Special favour in a suffering time, when the Lord ariseth to plead his controversy with the sinful generation. Hence saith the prophet Habakkuk, chap. iii. 16, " When I heard, my belly trembled ; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." The best security against a time of suffering is uprightness for God in a sinning, declining time.

(1.) Sometimes they are so seen to in a common calamity, that they are freed from trouble, as if they dwelt alone, or had a Goshen to live in, while darkness is over all the land. Hence saith the Lord ; Ezek. ix. 4, " Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof ;" an allusion to the Israelites in Egypt. Noah had an ark when the old world was destroyed ; Lot was saved when Sodom was burnt up. God can hide whom he will, when the world is in greatest confusion.

(2.) A mitigation of trouble when they meet with it in a suffering time. Though they may drink of the cup of common calamity, it shall be of the brim, not of the bottom ; there shall be much sweet mixture in it. Jer. xv. 11, " The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to intreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction." The rod shall be to them but the rod of a man, a weak man, that lays on but a slender stroke.

(3.) They shall be safe from the sting of trouble; they will have ease within, though trouble without, Hab. iii. 16; forecited. Their standing at a distance from the provocations that brought on the stroke, will afford much sweet peace, while others find themselves taken in the snares their own hands have made.

(4.) They lie fairest to be preserved from the temptations of a suffering time, and to be carried cleanly through. Hence is that promise; Rev. iii. 10, "Because thou hast kept the hour of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." The Lord in his just judgment, for the sins of a backsliding generation, often brings such a trial, as does not only expose men to suffering, but to sinning, and renouncing the religion that is left them. And it is too likely that they may come to be the trial of this generation; but they that now retain their integrity, are fairest to be preserved in such a day.

(5.) *Lastly*, Let the worst come to the worst in the matter of trouble, it shall be well with them. Josiah had a promise of dying in peace, 2 Kings xxii. 20, yet he died in battle; but the promise stood firm, for die as they will, they die in peace who die within the covenant of peace. The grave is one of God's hiding-places for his people.

Use. I exhort you to be perfect in this generation, to be persons of integrity, downright for God, rowing against the stream of this sinful generation. And in order to that,

1. Purge your conversation from the gross pollutions of the outward man. It is the character of "the man who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord," that "he hath clean hands, and a pure heart; hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," Psalm xxvi. 3, 4. Be blameless in your walk before the world, standing at a distance from the profanity of the generation. It is true that this is not enough; but alas! wickedness is at such a height in the generation, that there are few whose outward conversation is not stained with cursing, swearing, banning, drunkenness, deceitfulness in their dealings, lying, profanation of the Sabbath, &c. Surely, whoever they be that are perfect in this generation, it is not the like of these.

2. Be Christians indeed, in the inner man. Such an one is described Rom. ii. 28, 29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." For real religion is under a deep decay; and as profanity is devouring the souls of some, woful formality is preying on

the souls of others. The virgins are generally slumbering and sleeping, and the life of religion is much gone. O strive to be among the "few names which have not defiled their garments," Rev. iii. 4, And here I would recommend three things to you.

(1.) Study to be experimental Christians; Psalm xxxiv. 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Experimental religion is much worn out in our day. Men satisfy themselves with dry and sapless notions of religion in their heads, while they labour not to find the power of truth on their souls; and hence it comes to pass that truth itself is a-going so fast. See the promise; John viii. 32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

(2.) Be exercised Christians, like Paul; Acts xxiv. 16, "Herein do I exercise myself (says he) to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men;" exercised about your soul's case, carefully observing whether ye be going back, or coming forward; looking to the ills of your hearts, your pride, passion, untenderness, &c., and setting yourselves to mortify these; exercised to know what is sin and duty in particular cases; to notice the Lord's comings or goings with respect to your souls.

(3.) Lively and active Christians. The prophet complains, that it was otherwise in his time; Isa. lxvi. 7, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself, to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities." In public, and in private and secret duties, stir up yourselves to get near God; to get the favour of religion on your spirits; and strive against deadness, formality, and spiritual numbness, that has seized on most of the generation.

3. Be of a public spirit. That is a spirit sunk sore in this generation; in place of which is come a detestable neutrality, indifferency, selfishness, and worldliness; Phil. ii. 21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Be ye concerned for the public honour of God, for the ark of God, for Zion in all her distresses. Let your hearts say, as Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." They that are not with Christ in such a case are against him.

4. Be of a Gospel spirit, having high thoughts of the free grace of God, and deep impressions of the nothingness of man, and all that he can do; "Gal. vi. 14, "God forbid (says the apostle) that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Learn and

hold fast Gospel principles in your heads; keep up a Gospel frame in your hearts, and have a Gospel practice in your walk. Learn the art of living by faith, believing the promise, and on the credit of the promise going out in duty. Let love constrain you to obedience, and be strict and tender in the whole of your walk, and so adorn the profession of the Gospel.

5. Be accurate observers of your duty to God, whom the generation we live in has much cast behind their back. Be conscientious in the duties of godliness, frequent and fervent. Keep your hearts for him; worship him reverently, converse much with his word; give yourselves to prayer; let him have the morning as well as evening sacrifice in secret and in your families; name his dreadful and holy name as little as you can in common conversation, and never mention it but with awe on your spirits; sanctify his day, and let alone discoursing of your worldly business before and betwixt sermons, at home or at the kirk.

6. Be nice observers of justice and truth in your dealings with men; for both these are rare to a marvel in this generation, as they were of old. See Isa. lix. 13—15, Mic. vii. 1, &c. O sirs, do not go with the stream of the generation. Know that God is a God of justice and truth, and his soul loathes the unjust and deceitful man. A little gained or kept back by injustice, may bring a blasting curse on all you have, and may make it melt yet like snow before the sun. Make not the way of the multitude the standard of justice in your dealings; but "to the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Especially I recommend to you, and, as the messenger of God, do bind it this day on your consciences, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets," Matth. vii. 12. Lie not; but be ye tender of speaking truth, as ye would be tender of your souls. That is the character of the Lord's people; Isa. lxiii. 8, "Children that will not lie." Be slaves to your word; if it be to your loss, do not break your promises. This is the character of a citizen of Zion: Psalm xv. 4, "He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." And in a special manner do not break your promises, and alter your bargains with the poorer sort to their loss; Prov. xxii. 22, "Rob not the poor because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate."

7. Oppose and set yourselves against sin and wickedness in others, as ye have access; and so endeavour to stem the tide of the apostasy of the generation; Eph. v. 11, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Appear on

the Lord's side as witnesses for him, and his ways of truth and holiness; and discountenance and bear testimony against the dishonour you see done to his name. Strengthen the weak in hazard to be led away; admonish and warn those before whom temptations are laid; and shew yourselves adversaries to all sinful courses. Hence are these exhortations, 1 Thess. v. 14, "We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." Jude, vers. 22, 23, "Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." If ye be Christ's disciples, ye are the salt of the earth, Matth. v. 13, to resist putrefaction.

8. Do your endeavour to get a right set in the young generation, who are in great hazard at this day. It should be the work of all that fear God, to be concerned for posterity, after the example of David; Psalm xlv. 17, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever:" and therefore to give good example and precept in their families, as did Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19, "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment:" and to be useful to all others of the younger sort, as they have opportunity, to recommend the way of the Lord to them, and set them at odds with the sinful courses of the day. The hope of future times lies in them; and what will become of the land, and of the work of God, his cause and interest in it, if they be bred up in the ways of the present apostacy of the generation?

When we look to the rising generation at this day, they are visibly declining, generally corrupt in their manners, and worse than their fathers; however, in a few years, church, and state, and country will be in their hands. This is a weighty consideration for all who are concerned for religion. I would therefore drop a few words to those of the younger sort of both sexes.

1. While you are entering on the stage of the world at this time, you must either act the part of witnesses for God against the sinful courses of the day, or enter into the conspiracy of the generation against God. Ye cannot be neutral, however ye may think to be so; Matth. xii. 30, "He that is not with me," saith Christ, "is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Therefore consider well which to choose, and resolve to sist yourselves forthwith on Christ's side. Say as Joshua, chap. xxiv. 15, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that

were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

2. Know that this land is married to the Lord in solemn covenants to reform what is amiss, and to preserve the reformation in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, and to oppose whatsoever is contrary to sound godliness. And since that time there have been speats of defection and apostacy from God. But among our fathers were found witnesses for God, who, at the expense of all that was dear to them in the world, and even of their own lives, transmitted the testimony for truth and holiness unto us. It lies upon your consciences to take it up, and maintain it; for ye must be answerable to God for it in your stations; and woe, woe will be to that generation in whose hand it falls. This was expressly enjoined to, and strongly inculcated upon the Jewish church, as ye may see from Psalm lxxviii. 5—7; "For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, when he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise, and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments."

3. The speat of irreligion, neglect and contempt of seriousness, runs so high among the young generation of this day, that ye are in great hazard of being carried away with it; and can hardly miss to be so, if ye do not look well to yourselves. Therefore take these advices.

(1.) Begin the world as ye would desire to end it; Eccl. xii. 1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Though ye be young now, ye must be old, and go the way of all flesh then, if not before. It is pity to stand at a distance from religion and seriousness while ye are young, since ye know the day will come when ye will need it, and ye know not how soon.

(2.) Give an obedient ear to good advice for your souls. Nature is corrupt, youth is headstrong, raw, and inexperienced; there is much need for to be pliable to the counsels of those concerned for your spiritual welfare, Prov. v. 11, 12, "lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed; and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?" A few years may come to let you see the folly of the way of wilfulness.

(3.) Take heed to your company; 1 Cor. xv. 33, "Be not de-

ceived: Evil communications corrupt good manners." Ill company has been the ruin of many, and is so at this day. And many have fallen into such company in their youth, as has given them an ill set, that has stuck to them all their days; or led them into such courses, as have soon ruined them.

(4.) Observe carefully and improve what ye see befalling young people as well as others. You see there are of that sort carried off to eternity in the middle of their days; and is it not reasonable you should timely see to your own state, in case it be your lot too? You see what wretched snares the folly of youth betrays many into; and be ye therefore on your guard. Take heed of sad examples set before you, lest ye become examples to others.

(5.) Study to learn the lesson of the vanity of the world; Eccl. i. 2. What is youth, strength, beauty, wealth, &c. but fair fading flowers, that last not, but are quickly gone? Cease your towering imaginations, your flourishing hopes of worldly contents, your big promises to yourselves of what fine things you may reach; these will but make your disappointments the more cutting.

(6.) Consecrate yourselves to the Lord; and let Christ Jesus, the plant of renown, the chief among ten thousands, have your hearts and affections while ye are young; Prov. xxiii. 26, "My son," says the Lord, "give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." Lay hold on him in the covenant of grace, and knit unto him by faith, and so lay your measures for your welfare in time and eternity.

(7.) Carry yourselves tenderly and religiously, being holy in the whole of your conversation; Heb. xii. 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Whatever be your station in the world, be conscientious in the duties of it, looking on the all-seeing God as the party with whom ye have chiefly to do. And particularly be modest in your garb, speech, and behaviour; that Satan may not carry on his triumph at the rate he has often done in this place, to the dishonour of God, reproach of religion, and the ruin of souls.

(8.) *Lastly*, Eye God seriously, and walk by his counsel, in your settlement in the world; Prov. iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Lay your matters before the Lord in prayer, and, in dependence on him for light, weigh them in the balance of sanctified reason, according to the general directions of the word; and walk as the Lord is pleased to discover his mind. Especially in your marriages acknowledge God, and walk by his direction. The neglect of this in the old world was one of the springs of that wickedness that brought on the flood; and that

spring is fast running at this day, carrying on the apostacy of the generation.

I shall give you the following MOTIVES to press you to be perfect in this generation, as you have been exhorted. Consider,

1. It will be a great discovery of your sincerity, and unfeigned love to the Lord and the way of holiness. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations." A declining time is a trying time, and the naughtiness of many is thereby discovered; it is a sifting time, and there is much refuse appears. In times wherein religion and seriousness are in vogue, as sometimes they have been, many put on the mask of religion that have nothing of it in reality; and then the time turns, and wickedness goes with open mouth; so men cast off their mask, and appear in their own colours, and then appears who have it in reality; 1 Cor. xi. 19, "For there must be heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you."

2. It is a noble, heaven-like disposition, to be perfect in such a generation; to cleave to Christ, when the generation is so generally turning their back on him, John vi. 66—68. It speaks a man to have a rooted principle in him for God and his way, and not to be carried by the mean motives of the world's applause, ease, &c. towards religion, but out of conscience towards God.

3. It will glorify God very much; and that is the great business we have to do in the world, agreeable to what is said; 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Compare Matth. v. 16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This will be a testimony for God against a sinful generation, the keeping up of a standard for him, while so many standards are displayed against him; Prov. xxviii. 4, "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked; but such as keep the law, contend with them." Alas! what should come of his declarative glory, if there be none to show a respect to his commands.

4. It is the best service ye can do for the generation, like David, who "served his own generation by the will of God," Acts xiii. 36. No man is born for himself, every man is obliged to seek the good of mankind, and particularly to lay himself out for the good of the generation wherein he lives. Now there is a twofold good to be done the generation this way. (1.) It is a proper mean to keep them back from the way of sin, and to gain them to the way of the Lord. Example has a powerful influence. Hence is that exhortation; 1 Pet. iii. 1, "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by

the conversation of the wives." And if one soul can be gained that way, from the way of sin, how desirable is it? (2.) It is a proper mean to keep off wrath; it is the bearing up of the pillars of a land, Psalm lxxv. 3. If there had been but ten righteous men in Sodom, the Lord would have spared it for their sakes.

5. Suppose it should not be effectual to stop the career of any in their sin, yet it would leave a conviction of sin in their consciences. Hence the apostle exhorts the Philippians, chap. ii. 15, 16, to "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; among whom" says he "ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." A holy tender conversation, though wicked men's corruptions rise against it, yet their consciences approve of it; and while they are running down the godly man for it, yet in their consciences they have a secret honour for him.

6. It is a debt we owe to posterity. Hence says the Psalmist; Psalm xlv. 17, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." The keeping of the way of God in a declining generation, is a transmitting of the testimony for God to those yet unborn; and the going the way of the multitude is a betraying of them, as it were a conspiring to take the light out of the room they were coming into, that they may have nothing but darkness.

7. It is an honourable thing. It is to be a witness for God; and this is one of the characters of his people; Isa. xliii. 10, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." Behold, the honourer of God shall be honoured, when those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed, 1 Sam. ii. 30; Prov. x. 7, "The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot." How savoury is the name of Noah, Lot, Caleb, and Joshua at this day, while the name of the old world, Sodom, &c. is in disgrace?

8. It is the best course ye can take to be safe in the evil day, when the Lord calls the generation to an account. A sinning time will be followed with a suffering time; and it is good to prepare for it in time. They quite mistake their measures, who go off the Lord's way for safety; Prov. x. 9, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways, shall be known."

9. *Lastly*, It will be most comfortable in a dying hour; as it was to the good king Hezekiah, when he said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight," Isa.

xxxviii. 3. Sinful going with a multitude, coming in remembrance on a death-bed, makes bitter reflections; whereas that is sweet, which is mentioned; 2 Cor. i. 12, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

I shall conclude all with the following directions.

Direction 1. See, in the first place, to be just by faith in Jesus Christ. Where the soul has not the imputed righteousness of Christ there can be no righteousness of a holy life. For the unjustified man is under the curse; he wants the root of good works, viz. faith But the soul furnished with faith, is furnished for holy walking.

2. Make the word of God your rule, and not men. "All men are liars," Rom. iii. 4. It is dangerous for one to be satisfied with a thing, just because men are so. Most men, good men, will not be a safe standard in a declining time.

3. Labour for holy courage in the Lord's way; men are in hazard of being ashamed of Christ in a sinful time. There is need of a brow to face the daring wickedness of such a generation.

4. Labour to be resolute for God, and a good conscience, Eph. vi. 15. They that would row against the stream, must be resolute, like Joshua, chap. xxiv. 15; who, whatever others should do, was resolved with his house, to serve the Lord.

5. Let not the world's account of singularity have weight with you. They will be apt to think it strange that you "should run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you," 1 Pet. iv. 4.

But do not regard their opinions or censures. Many comply with sinful courses, because they cannot away with being singular. But better be alone in God's way, than out of it with the whole world.

God's people can hardly miss to be a world's wonder sometimes, as was the case with Joshua, and his fellows; Zech. iii. 8, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at."

6. *Lastly*, Keep eternity much in view; 2 Cor. iv. 18, "Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." This is an excellent help to get right through an evil world. He that considers, he knows not how soon he may step out of the world into eternity, will take heed to his steps, that he step not wrong in a declining day.

Therefore let the example of Noah, who "was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and walked with God," have a due influence upon you to move you to follow his steps.

## PERILOUS TIMES IN THE LAST DAYS.*

2 Tim. iii. 1,

*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

In these words we have three things.

1. The notification of an event as future; "perilous times *shall* come." Not that there are any times in themselves perilous, or unlucky days, as the superstitious imagine; but they are perilous in respect of the evil that is a-going in them among men, ver. 2, &c. The word properly signifies difficult; times wherein it will be hard for people to keep their feet, to know how to carry themselves, to keep out of danger, and keep a good conscience; and these are perilous times.

Of these it is said, they "shall come," [*Gr.* shall be on.] They will be on men, in the course of providence, to try what metal they are of; as darkness comes on after light, and adversity after prosperity, in their turn.

2. The time of that event; "in the last days." These are, in scripture-style, the days of the Messias, the days of the gospel, even that whole period, according to Acts ii. 17, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God), I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." Heb. i. 1, 2, "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." It is an Old Testament expression, which sounds "the last of the days;" and days being used absolutely, these days are the days of the world, running from the creation to the end. Now, the days of the gospel are the last part of these days, the concluding period of time. In these last days are several particular periods; the first of which was the last time of the Jewish state, beginning from the time of our Saviour, to the destruction of Jerusalem; and more periods followed, and some are yet to come; but from the time of our Saviour to the end of the world, is "the last days."

3. The notice to be taken of that event; "This know also;" rather, "Now know this;" be informed of this, consider it duly, and lay it to heart, that being forewarned, ye may be armed against the "perilous times."

* A sermon preached at Ettrick, November 14, 1731; a fast day appointed by the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale.

Doctrine. As the days of the gospel are the last days, so men should know there are in the course of providence difficult and perilous times that come on in these days.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. The days of the gospel as the last days.

II. The difficult and perilous times that come on in gospel-days.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. We shall consider "the days of the gospel as the last days." And so we may take them up in a threefold view.

1. As the last days of the world, the latter end of time. With relation to them that oath is made; Rev. x. 6, "That there should be time no longer." The world has lasted long now, it must have an end; and the last part of its time is begun, and far on. The morning and forenoon of the world are over; it is afternoon with it now, and drawing toward the evening.

2. As the days of the last dispensation of grace towards the world, with which God's dealing with sinners for reconciliation shall be closed; according to Rev. x. 7, "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, the mystery of God shall be finished." There have been three dispensations of grace in the world; the Patriarchal dispensation in the first days; the Mosaical dispensation in the middle days; and now the Christian dispensation in the last days. The first two are now off the stage, and shall never come on again; the third now is; and after it there shall never be another.

3. As the best days of the world in respect of the greatest advantages attending them. The last works of God are always the greatest, as ye may see in the account of the creation; Gen. i; so the circumstances of the world to come, are greater than those of this. The gospel-dispensation far excels the other two, in clearness, extensiveness, and efficacy, through a larger measure of the Spirit. One may say, Have there not been perilous times in all the days? Noah's times in the first; the Egyptian bondage, Babylonish captivity, Antiochus's persecution, &c., in the middle days; what wonder there be so in the last days? So indeed we say now; but consider the Old Testament prophecies of the last days, and the big expectations that behoved to be raised thereupon; and ye will see need for this caution, frequent among the apostles, that even in the "last days," for as great days as they were to be, there were "perilous times to be on."

Use of this point.

1. Take heed how ye improve the gospel. Delay not to comply with the call thereof; for ere long an account will be required of

it. The days of it are the last days of the world, wherein time comes to an end, and the world must make their account for the entertainment they have given it. Behold he cometh "from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

2. Ye must be saved by falling in with the gospel-call and method of salvation, or else perish; for it is the last dispensation of grace. It is God's last method with a sinful lost world; after which they are not to expect a new one. It is the last ship going off for Immanuel's land; if ye slight it, ye will have no more opportunity for ever; Heb. x. 26, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

3. The contempt of the gospel is the most dangerous adventure ever the world made, and will have the most terrible issue; gospel-days being the last and best; and the better are the days, the contempt will be the more dangerous. The contempt of the Patriarchal dispensation was punished by the flood; of the Mosaical, by the Babylonish captivity, and other heavy plagues; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21 How terrible must the punishment be of the contempt of the gospel dispensation? The destruction of Jerusalem was the first swatch of it, the conflagration of the world will be the issue.

4. *Lastly*, There may be great and good things in days which yet are dangerous days; "in the last days shall be perilous times." The best days that ever Judea saw, were in the days that went before the destruction of Jerusalem; the Spirit was poured out in such a measure as never took place before nor since; Acts ii. 17, forecited; but there came after a pouring out of "wrath to the uttermost;" 1 Thess. ii. 16. In these days of ours there are great things not to be overlooked. Learning, and the art of civil management in improving of ground and manufactures, are carried to a pitch they were not at before; which sometimes brings in mind the case of the Cainites, among whom arts flourished while piety went to wreck, as ye may read, Gen. iv. 20—22. Nay there are good things done in these our days, great good things, the like to which were never done before in our nation; particularly the erecting of schools for propagating Christian knowledge in the highlands and islands, the erecting of the Infirmary in Edinburgh. Nay, some glorious gospel-truths have been in our days set in an uncommon light. And yet for all they are certainly most perilous days. Which brings me to consider,

II. The difficult and perilous times that come on in gospel-days.

Even in the days of the gospel, in which sometimes there are sweet and glorious times, yet at other times there come difficult and perilous times.

We must inquire what makes these perilous times.

1*st*, An old controversy lying over untaken up. They that are in debt, are always in danger. The Jews were a bloody generation, from generation to generation they were murderers of their prophets; that was an old debt on the head of the generation in our Saviour's time; Matth. xxiii. 31, and made their time a perilous time, for it was like a train lying within their bowels, which at last came to blow them up, ver. 35. So good Josiah's days were perilous times, by reason of an old controversy laid in the days of Manasseh his grandfather; 2 Kings xxiii. 26.

Our times are so, by reason of the iniquity of the late times, which is like that of Baal-peor, that brought "a plague on the congregation of the Lord: Josh. xxii. 17. The avowed breach of covenants made with God for reformation; the blood of the Lord's people shed in fields and scaffolds, for adhering to the oath of God; the sinning, confining, imprisoning, banishing of them, and other barbarous usage of them, whereby for many years these nations carried on a war with heaven; these, I say, are an old debt lying on the head of Scotland, England, and Ireland, for which God will pursue them, and pursue so as it will appear to be both for principle and interest during the time it has lain over. These things are forgotten, or laughed at now as what we have no concern in; a stone is rolled to the mouth of that sepulchre. But God will readily arise, if the stone were sealed, and they forgot quite and clean; 1 Thess. v. 3, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety: then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; they shall not escape."

2*dly*, Error or corruption of principles spreading. This was foretold to happen in the latter days; 1 Tim. iv. 1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Then the fountains men drink at, are poisoned; the faith once delivered to the saints, is exchanged for strong delusions, to believe lies; and many are in hazard of following their pernicious ways.

There are three dangerous engines of this kind that the gates of hell are directing this day against the foundation of the church built on the rock.

1. Legalism; An attempt against the grace of Christ, bringing in a scheme of religion that has no relation to Jesus Christ and his Spirit, putting virtue or a virtuous life in the room of Christ's

righteousness for acceptance with God, and the exerting of our natural powers in room of the influences of his Spirit. By which means the corruption of nature, and the necessity of regeneration, are buried in deep silence; and living by faith, attending the Spirit's influences, and communion with God, are branded as enthusiasm; and desertion is accounted the product of a crazy imagination. Thus a refined Heathenism is palmed on us for Christianity.

2. Arianism; An attempt against the person of Christ, bringing in a Christ that is not of the Father's equal, not the most high God, independent, and self-existent; but an inferior god, an arbitrary, dependent being; thus striking at the foundation of our salvation, taking away the infinite dignity of his person, which gives the sufficient value to his sacrifice. And it is to be feared, that when Christ ariseth to vindicate his own glory, it will be found, that the Church of Scotland has not given sufficient testimony of their indignation against this blasphemy.

3. Deism; An attempt against all revealed religion, casting off the whole gospel and Bible by the lump, with the whole way of salvation by Jesus Christ; leaving us nothing, but that there is a God, and that this God is to be served as our reason directs. Such a stroke was not given against Christianity in the time of Prelacy, no, not in the times of Popery. Scotland may, and shall say, Alas! for the union with England; we were going to ruin before, but we have run to ruin since that fatal time, as to our most valuable concerns.

3*dly*, Immoralities abounding. That this is the case in the last days, we may consult the text and context, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their ownselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." The opening of the sluice of impiety and wickedness, and the spreading and prevailing of scandalous practices, make perilous times.

If these make perilous times, ours are very perilous. I doubt if ever contempt of God, his Gospel, and all that is sacred, was ever at a greater height. The first table and second table are trampled on with a witness, so that we may say, Hos. iv. 1—3, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and

lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away." God's worship is contemned and slighted, his name abused and blasphemed, and his Sabbaths profaned. Unfaithfulness prevails in all relations; murders, uncleanness, marriage-vows never more lightly treated, injustice and fraud in dealing, lying, covetousness, &c. What can be found among a people professing the name of Christ, to bring on wrath, that is not to be found in our land at this day?

Here let us view the scandalous outbreakings among us. Many such we see, opening the mouths of enemies to blaspheme the way of God. But how few do we see truly humbled, but almost always more concerned for their own blasted honour and reputation, than for the honour of God! And unless it be in those things which by use require public satisfaction, people cannot endure to be touched or checked with their faults told them.

Many other things there are that make perilous times, and which make ours so; such as the hiding of the Lord's face, threatenings and symptoms of wrath; among which may be reckoned the terrible thunders by which so many were killed on the last day of July this year; the shock which the fruits of the earth endured in the harvest, though Providence seasonably interposed, yet in a way that gives occasion to sing of mercy and judgment; and the murrain that in some places has appeared among the cattle.

But one thing deserves particular notice, as rendering our time perilous, viz., the church joining with the state in robbing the people of the Lord of their just right to choose their own ministers, and thrusting in ministers on congregations violently, and over their bellies. This is a most ready way to fill the church with naughty men, to ruin religion, and quite mar the interest and success of the Gospel, which are already very low.

I might here shew in what respects such times are perilous, that they are perilous to the present and succeeding generations, to their souls, and to their bodies.

And how they come in the course of providence to fall out by its permission, viz., for proving and trying men; 1 Cor. xi. 19, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you,"

But I will conclude, exhorting you therefore to know and lay to heart, that our times are perilous times, and therefore to bestir yourselves for your own safety, and be on your guard. Let the

peril of the times cause you to join yourself to God in Christ, and keep near him; beware of worldly-mindedness, instability and wavering, pride and self-conceit, Rev. vii. 3. Strive against the stream, if ye would not be carried away with it.

## THE END OF TIME, AND THE MYSTERY OF GOD FINISHED WITH IT.*

Rev. x. 6, 7,

*And swear that there shall be time no longer; but the mystery of God should be finished.*

The going out of an old year, and the coming in of a new, doth so natively lead to consider the passing nature of time, that they must be very carnal, light, and inconsiderate, to whom such an event occasions not serious thoughts. For while one sees time on such a run, how can one miss the thought of its running out, or that there "shall be time no longer," as saith the text?

In which we have a deposition, or a matter declared upon oath, made by a mighty angel, Christ, the angel of the covenant, whose glory and majesty is inconceivable, as clothed with a cloud; darkening all created glory, as the sun doth the stars; and whose dispensations of providence are steady and pure, as pillars of fire, verse 1. The gesture used by him in swearing, is not laying his hand upon the book, though he had one in his hand; that is Antichrist's way of swearing; but it is lifting up the hand to heaven, verse 5, the natural and approved gesture of an oath, as being a solemn invocating of God, who dwelleth there. The scope of the deposition is, to comfort the church against the heaviness of the reign of Antichrist brought in by the fifth trumpet, as the Turks were by the sixth. The parts of the deposition are two.

1. The negative part, "that time should be no longer;" (Gr.) "that time shall not be any more." Most interpreters understand this restrictedly, of the time of the Roman empire, or the Antichristian tyranny; others, absolutely, of the world's ending, time's removal for good and all, and eternity succeeding in its room; no more days, months, or years. This I take to be the true sense; for (1.) It is agreeable to the scope, being a general including the particular

* Several Sermons preached at Ettrick in the year 1732. The first sermon was preached January 2.

of the time of the reign of Antichrist, who is not totally destroyed till under the seventh vial, that brings in the end of the world, chap. xvi. 17—21. (2.) Most agreeable to the world, which is precisely "time," not "the time." (3.) To the circumstances of the action noted in the context; the little book, pointing at the small number of events remaining to be fulfilled; the right foot on the sea, the left on the earth, noting his universal dominion, how he could make the sea move no more, and tread away this earth, verse 2; then the seven thunders, noting seven other things to take place under the seventh trumpet, viz., the seven vials, which bring the world to an end. And in relation to these, it is said "time should be no more," or longer than these are running, vers. 3, 4. Finally, the description of the party sworn by, viz., God, that is, Christ himself, who swears by himself; described here as living for ever, most appositely to the mentioning of the ending of time; as creator of the world and all therein, and therefore able to bring it to an end.

Object. But to what purpose should that be confirmed by an oath, which John knew well enough, and nobody is ignorant of? Ans. John knew before, and so did others, that time and the world would have an end sometime or other; but he knew not that it would end under the seventh trumpet; that it would not last a moment longer than that trumpet, which is the thing here asserted. The thing which leads to,

2. The positive part of the oath, that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel the mystery of God should be finished. Some understand this mystery in a restrained sense; some of the end of the world, the resurrection and general judgment; some of the calling of the Jews, and overthrow of Antichrist. And these indeed are called mysteries; 1 Cor. xv. 51, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Rom. xi. 25, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, —that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." 2 Thess. ii. 7, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way." But nowhere, that I have observed, is any of them called the mystery of God. Besides, the finishing of the mystery here mentioned plainly supposeth that mystery, whatever it was, to be begun, and well far on before the seventh trumpet, or days of the seventh angel; which agrees to none of these. Wherefore I understand it with others more generally, and take it to be meant of the whole of the divine management in the world, in pursuance of and according to the gospel scheme and contrivance, called

the mystery of God, Col. ii. 2. This is a mystery of many parts; therefore called the mysteries of the kingdom of God, Luke viii. 10, all which parts being mysterious, the kingdom itself is a mystery, known only to believers, truly, though yet imperfectly; as saith our Lord, Mark iv. 11, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables. The mystery of the kingdom of God. There have been many kingdoms in the world, especially the four monarchies, all which are now gone; the kingdom of Antichrist, a mystery of iniquity, has long made a great figure, and is not yet come wholly to an end; but in the time of all these God had, and yet has a kingdom, which is the mystery of God, which has long been, and yet is going on. But it will be finished in bringing the work to perfection, in completing the happiness of his people, and ruin of his enemies, at the end of time. Then Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom finished, 1 Cor. xv. 24. The time of the finishing it is in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, which days take in all the seven vials. When it shall begin to sound, then the finishing of the mystery of God begins, the last period of that mysterious kingdom of God comes in; the which finishing is carried on by degrees, in the seven vials, till it is perfectly finished by the last of them. And then time, and the mystery of God in his kingdom in this world, end both together. Now we are within the finishing period.

Two doctrines may be deduced from the words.

Doctrine I. It is a matter of greatest weight and concern to mankind, that there is a certain period set, and in the general revealed, at which time comes to an end, and never shall be any more. This is a sworn point, and a good man will not swear but what is of weight; it is sworn by the Lord himself, therefore it is of the greatest weight.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall consider,

I. This truth itself, That there is a period set at which time shall be no more.

II. The weight of it, and its concern to mankind.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. We shall consider this truth itself, That there is a period set at which time shall be no more. This implies,

1. That time had a beginning. Time is the measure of the creature's duration by its several parts; so it could be of no ancienter date than the creation. It began with the world, Gen. i. 1. There was a day, a year, that was the first, before which there was not

another. But eternity was before, and will be after time; which therefore appears at present like a small island lifting up its head in the midst of the ocean.

2. Time has run from the beginning, and is running on in an uninterrupted course of addition of moments, hours, days, months, and years. About four thousand years of it passed before the birth of Christ; and now is begun the one thousand seven hundred and thirty-second year from that happy period. So there want not three hundred years now to complete the world's week of six thousand years; after which many have thought the eternal Sabbath would come. But as yet time is, and the mystery of God is not yet finished, nor the treaty with sinners broken off.

3. Time will come to an end. It has run long, but it will run out at length. The last sand in the glass of this world will pass, and then its glass is run out, and not to be turned again. The period is set in the divine decree, the last day and hour, though no man knows them.

Now, time coming to an end, the things of time go too, being swept away with it. So, "that time shall be no longer," nor "be any more," speaks these following weighty things; viz.—That there is a set period at which,

1. This present world shall be no more; these heavens and earth shall pass away by the general conflagration; 2 Pet. iii. 10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Time and they began together, and they will end together. Men are busy now, who to get most of this earth; and a mighty pother is made about it, like ants in a hillock; and could they get the heavens marched too, they would no doubt inclose so much of them for themselves also. But then the hillock will be scattered, the stage taken down, not a bit of earth left for their foot.

2. New years shall be no more. The year will come, the month, the day, hour and minute, after which there shall never be another.

All these are parts of time; so time being at an end, there will be no more of them. The annual motion of the sun, and its diurnal motion about the earth, make years and days; but where are they when the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the earth is burnt up? So the Scripture frequently mentions the last day, as John vi. 40. Let us improve our years then for eternity, and count our days so as to apply our hearts to wisdom.

3. The different seasons will be no more. There will be no more summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. They were once intermitted for a while, during the deluge; then it was secured there

should not be another intermitting of them, but withal that they should end for good and all, with time; Gen. viii. 22, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." There will be an eternal spring in heaven; but an eternal winter, as it were, in hell, where is gnashing of teeth. Now these seasons roll about; but time ending, that revolution of seasons is no more.

4. The business of this life shall be no more. There shall be no more tilling of the ground, tending of flocks, merchandising, nor trades. All these belong to the fashion of this world which passeth away. There are none of them without toil; but then the righteous rest from their labours, and the wicked will have their toil of another sort, under the burden of divine wrath. How unhappy must they be, who have no pleasure nor satisfaction in anything else, since these are not to last!

5. The means of sustaining this life shall be no more. There shall be no more eating, drinking, nor sleeping. These take up a great part of our time now, in the doing of them: and in providing for back and belly the whole time of many goes. But time being gone, the saints shall be supported and satisfied, without meat or drink, and refreshed without sleep; and the wicked will not get a drop of water to cool their tongue, nor rest night nor day.

6. Relations shall be no more. Time going dissolves them all, as fellow-travellers, part when come to their journey's end. There shall be no more magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; Job iii. 19, "The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master." Only the relation betwixt Christ and his people as head and members, which is not of this world, shall remain; and so the relation to God as his children, Luke xx. 35, 36; who are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Among Adam's children, the children are subject to their parents, and inferiors to superiors; but at the resurrection, all the saints will be immediately subject to God, one as well as another; all the wicked subjected under him as his enemies.

7. Space for repentance shall be no more. Now sinners have time to repent and turn to God, assured of welcome on their returning. But time once gone, as the tree is fallen it must lie for ever. There shall be no more means of grace, offers of Christ, nor place for repentance, Matth. xxv. 10. The time of trial is over; and they who have misimproved it, cannot be taken on a second trial.

8. Tribulation and adversity of the godly shall be no more. They must have it, cannot miss it; but then it is in the world only as

saith our Lord, John xvi. 33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." When time is at an end, their trials are at an end, and they shall have an eternal recompence, the days of their mourning are ended. They shall look back on their sorrows as waters that fail; their griefs ran long, but the brook dries up, being but a winter brook.

9. *Lastly*, The prosperity and comfort of the wicked, Luke xvi. 25, shall be no more. Now the sun of prosperity often shines on them, and the godly are sometimes stumbled at it, as you will find in Psalm lxxiii.; and they themselves hardened by it, as appears from Eccles. viii. 11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." But stay till the end of time, that the web of providence be cut out, it will appear there was no cause for either of these. Whatever comforts they enjoy in time, there will be a total eclipse of their comfort at the end of time.

II. The second thing is, The weight of this truth, and its concern to mankind. That it is of weight and concern to them, appears in its being sworn to them; which implies these three things.

1. That men are very heedless about it, and slow to believe it, and be impressed with it. The virgins would fain slumber and sleep, and therefore care not for looking for the coming of the bridegroom. Most men are so in love with the things of time, that they desire no other state of affairs. And because they have no will time should end, they work up themselves to a belief, that there is little hazard of its ending; and confirm themselves therein, from that there is no appearance of its ending; like those scoffers who said, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," 2 Pet. iii. 4.

2. A legal intimation made to them of its ending. Whether it is believed or not, it is duly intimated, in the most solemn manner unto all to whom the Bible comes. So they are fairly warned, and cannot pretend ignorance; and this intimation will have its weight certainly, when the thing is seen fulfilled.

3. That the period of time is unalterably fixed, the bounds of it set, beyond which it cannot go; for it is set by an oath. Often did the Israelites provoke the Lord, yet he bore with them; but at length he sware, that they should not enter into his rest. And there was no reversing of that. Now he has set the bounds of time, and confirmed it by oath, no prayers nor intreaties can prevail to carry it an hour beyond the set period.

The weight of the thing lies in these three.

1. That then that which concerns mankind's happiness or misery is completed; the state of probation is over, and the state of recompence takes place in perfection, both as to their bodies and souls. Here at this turning point, the end of time, every one is brought to his utmost pitch, the godly of happiness, the wicked of misery. And what can be of greater weight?

2. That then eternity succeeds, the state of all for ever unalterable, no end to be expected more. Whatever case we are now in, we know it will have an end, there will be an alteration, and we may measure the time of its continuance; but eternity fixes unalterably, and there is no more to measure by. Therefore this matter is of greatest weight.

3. *Lastly*, That now or never must be done what is to be done for eternity. Hence our Lord said, John ix. 4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." Time ending, no more can be done of that nature. It is not to be expected it will begin again, that men may do what they did not while it lasted.

USE. Then be exhorted suitably to improve this intimation of time's ending. And,

1. Look beyond time, this world, and the state of things in it; carry your views into the other world, to eternity; 2 Cor. iv. 18, "Look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." O why should we confine our view to time, which must end and be no more; and neglect the succeeding eternity, which affords a boundless prospect? It would be profitably spent time, that were spent in meditating on eternity, what we shall be there, what shall be our eternal lot.

2. Lift your hearts from off the things of time, and set them on those that are eternal; Col. iii. 2, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." It is impossible the former should be a suitable portion for a rational creature, that must be for ever; since they must end with time. It is but a small portion of the things of time we can get, however eagerly we pursue. But suppose we could have them all, there is yet a period set, at which even in that case we would have nothing. How much more wisely would we act, to set our hearts on things that are eternal?

3. Use this world passingly, as pilgrims and strangers in it; "for the fashion of it passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29—31, "The time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as

though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." There is no wisdom in dipping deep therein, loading ourselves with its thick clay. That will but retard us in our way to the better world, and occasion such a throng, as to keep us from our main work till the time for it is over and gone.

4. Let not the frowns of this world, the troubles and trials of the present life, make deep impression on us: let us guard ourselves against that, by considering they will not last. They are but clouds, that be they never so thick and black, will vanish away ere long. And if we are Christ's, we will soon have an eternal sunshine; if not, the thickest clouds that are here, are nothing comparable to the blackness of darkness for ever.

5. Be not lifted up with the world's smiles, nor value yourselves on worldly prosperity; for time will put an end to this also. Time-honours, wealth, and ease, are but like bubbles of water, that in a moment will come to nothing. Whatever differences be now among men, occasioned by these outward things, they are confined within the boundaries of a few years; which being run out, the servant is as good as the master, and the poor as the rich.

6. *Lastly*, Improve time while it lasts, for the ends it is given you for. And that is for,

1. Laying a good foundation for eternity, getting out of your natural state into the state of grace, believing on Christ, and repenting of sin.

2. Living to the honour of God, endeavouring to act in your sphere for propagating the name and kingdom of Christ. Hence said the good king Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 19, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth."

3. *Lastly*, Serving your generation in usefulness to mankind, seeking to forward the spiritual and temporal good of others; as David did, Acts xiii. 36, who served his own generation by the will of God.

Doct. II. As time is continued for carrying on the mystery of God in his kingdom among men, so there is a period set, at which that mystery will be finished, and time end with it.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. The mystery of God in his kingdom among men, generally and particularly.

II. The relation betwixt the mystery of God and time.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. We shall consider the mystery of God in his kingdom among men. And in the general we shall shew,

1*st*, What that mystery of God is.

2*dly*, In what respects the kingdom of God is a mystery.

*First*, We shall consider what that mystery of God is. A mystery is a secret or hidden thing, hid under some vail or other from the eyes of beholders; which vail must be drawn by ere one can see it. The scripture mentions two mysteries.

1. The mystery of iniquity; 2 Thess. ii. 7, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." And that is the kingdom of Antichrist; Rev. xvii. 5, "And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth." That is a mystery, hiding the greatest iniquity under a vail of sanctity, carrying on the designs of hell under pretences of Heaven's countenance; 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10, "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Hence, for many hundreds of years, the world wondered after the beast, taking Antichrist, the great enemy of Christ, for his vicar and chief servant; though some now and then saw through this mystery, and at the reformation the vail was taken off to several nations.

2. The mystery of God, as in the text. And as the former is a mystery of iniquity, this is a mystery of godliness; 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." Godly in its nature and tendency. As the former is the kingdom of Antichrist this is the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom God carries on among men by Christ, as the devil carries on the other among them by Antichrist. So the scripture manifestly refers this mystery to Christ; 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh;" &c. Col. ii. 2,—"to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." There are mysteries of God in nature; but the great mystery of God is in Christ; in whom there lies hid more of God than in a thousand worlds, and by whom God carries on a mysterious kingdom among men, the kingdom of Christ, called "the mystery of the kingdom of God;" Mark iv. 11. For the better understanding whereof,

1. Consider, God from eternity chose to himself, out of fallen mankind, a church, in the salvation of whom he should be glorified for ever. These are the general assembly, and church of the firstborn, which are in heaven;" Heb. xii. 23. They were to come into

the world in different ages, one generation of them after another, and to tarry an appointed time in the world, ere they should be transported into heaven. And many of them are not yet born, nor will be in a haste.

2. There behoved to be a divine conduct about them, for fulfilling of this purpose of God anent them. There were many things stood in the way of it. They are naturally enemies to God, and would not come to him; without strength, and unable to come; there is a bar of justice in their way, as sinners, that mars their access, though they were both willing and able; there are enemies to keep them back altogether, and when they do come to him, to draw them away from him again. Therefore it is God himself must take the conduct for that purpose, otherwise it will never be fulfilled; John vi. 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." Phil. ii. 13, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

3. The Father has devolved this conduct of them on his Son Jesus Christ, given him the kingdom among men for fulfilling this eternal purpose of love; Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." God had a people in Egypt whom he minded for Canaan; he gave Moses and Aaron the charge to bring them out, to lead them through the wilderness forty years, and then Joshua to bring them in to, and seat them in the promised land. These all were types of Christ, on whom is devolved the charge of bringing the church of the elect out of the state of their spiritual bondage, through this world, into heaven. Thus the whole power is lodged in the hand of Christ the Son of God; John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" and he being vested with it by the Father, is thereby his King; *i. e.* set up by him, administering the kingdom in his name; Psalm ii. 6, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."

4. Christ having received this trust from his Father, has been under the Old Testament, all along, and now is, executing it, and will continue so to the end of time, that he has fulfilled the divine purpose, and finished the conduct, and so delivered up the elect perfected. This is the kingdom of Christ, which also is the kingdom of God, because given him of God, and administered for the fulfilling of the purpose of God. And this administration being perfected, the kingdom is delivered up finished, the eternal purpose being fulfilled; 1 Cor. xv. 24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power."

5. *Lastly*, Our Lord's management of this trust, and his conduct in the matter, is very mysterious, but exactly according to the plan laid in the eternal decree, and given him of his Father; Eph. i. 11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." There is a mystery of the Father's will; ver. 9, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself." This is the rule of this kingdom and conduct, which therefore must be mysterious. Therefore it is called "the mystery of God," as being a mysterious management, wherein the purpose of God is carried on.

Thus ye see, that the mystery of God is the kingdom of Christ, or the conduct and managing of matters by Jesus Christ, to the fulfilling of the purposes of God, for the complete salvation of the church.

*Secondly*, I will show in what respects it is a mystery, the mystery of God; or that the kingdom of Christ, and his management, is a mystery, the mystery of God.

1. In itself, it is a hidden and abstruse thing; Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Job xi. 7—9, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? it is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." It consists of "the deep things of God;" 1 Cor. ii. 10, which the creature may stand and admire, but cannot dive into the bottom of. It appears among men indeed, but still as an unfathomable deep, requiring our humble attention to it, and an entire resignation, but not to be sounded. God shewed his infinite wisdom in the works of creation; but the work of redemption and salvation of a lost world, was the master-piece of that wisdom. If the former is a mystery, how much more the latter?

2. To natural men it is an absolute mystery; 1 Cor. ii. 14. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They do not at all see into it, their eyes cannot pierce it, nor can they break the shell of it. They see its outward appearance in the world, which is very mean; and they judge of it accordingly, so fall into fatal mistakes about it; preferring the vanities of the world unto the riches of that kingdom, the slavery of their own lusts to the service of Christ; so that Christ is a stumbling-stone and rock of offence to them. It is true, they may think

they know this mystery of God; for they may be able to talk of it, yea to preach it. But,

(1.) Though they know the words in which the mystery of God is revealed, they know not the thing itself. As one hearing a parable in his mother-tongue, understands the grammatical sense of the words, yet perceives not the hidden meaning wrapt up in them; so they know the words, but perceive not the heavenly things proposed in them; Mark iv. 11.

(2.) They know not the mystery by the Spirit's teaching; all they have of it, is by human teaching; so their knowledge of it cannot reach into the heart of it; Jude ver. 19. They are destitute of saving illumination; and the highest spring of their knowledge of it is flesh and blood, improved by external objective revelation; which is not sufficient. Internal revelation alone is so; Matth. xvi. 17.

(3.) They know it not by experience, which is necessary to give the true knowledge of it. Hence is that exhortation; 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." They know the mystery by hearsay, but never felt the power of it on their spirits; so they know no more of it, than one may know of honey or vinegar, who never tasted how sweet the one is, and how sour the other.

3. It is a mystery to the godly themselves, the real members of the kingdom of Christ. None in the world have such knowledge of it as they, and none have such a sense of the mysteriousness of it. Whatever they reach of it, it is still a mystery in their eyes. See how Paul speaks of it; 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness," &c. Col. iv. 3, 4, "Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." Hence, after all their progress made in it, they are still to learn; they see many difficulties in it which they are not able to comprehend. Consider here,

(1.) They are but initiated into this mystery while they are here, and cannot expect a full insight into it, till they come to glory; 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." They get as much insight into the mystery of Christ's kingdom and management as keeps them from stumbling at him; and all the wisdom of the world and learning cannot give so much; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

(2.) What insight into it they have, is not owing to their own penetration, but is the gift of God to them. Hence, says our Lord, Mark iv. 11, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God," &c. It is the Spirit's teaching, who draws by the vail, and opens the mystery, Hence saith the apostle; 1 Cor. ii. 10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And when the Spirit withdraws, they are apt to be offended at some pieces of his management, being so puzzled with them that they know not what to make of them; Psalm lxxiii.

4. It is a mystery even to the angels. None was able but Christ himself to open the sealed book, or look thereon; Rev. v. 3. The angels in heaven are perfect in knowledge; but their knowledge was, and is capable of increase, and did receive increase by the more open setting up of the kingdom of Christ in the world by the gospel, whereby many folds of the wisdom of God in this mystery were opened to them which they saw not before. Hence saith the apostle, Eph. iii. 9, 10, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." And still they regard it as a mystery to be dived into; 1 Pet. i. 12, —"which things the angels desire to look into." And yet they know not the time of its finishing; Mark xiii. 22, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven,"

5. *Lastly*, It will continue a mystery to the end, as is implied in the text. There have been things in the world dark mysteries for a time, which yet have at length been fully discovered and understood. But as the divine conduct by Christ has been a mystery in all generations past, it will be so in all generations to come. It will never be fully understood till it is completed, the web fully wrought out, and laid before our eyes altogether. Then will there be a surprising beauty and harmony seen through the whole.

More particularly, for opening of this mystery of God, we shall consider it under a threefold view,

1*st*, As it was laid before time.

2*dly*, As begun and carried on in time.

3*dly*, As finished with time.

First, We shall consider this mystery as it was laid before time It is not a device of yesterday, a late or new contrivance; but older than men or angels, even from eternity; Eph. i. 9, "Having made

known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself." Compare chap. iii. 11, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." If we would see the foundation and plan of this mystery, we must look back before all ages unto the depths of the eternal counsels in the breast of God, before the world was, now revealed to us by the Gospel. And here we may consider,

1*st*, The ground upon which it was raised.

2*dly*, The mystery itself.

*First*, We shall consider the ground upon which it was raised. And that was the eternal foresight of man's fall from a state of holiness and happiness, into a state of sin and misery, Rom ix. 21. This pre-supposes a twofold purpose.

1. A purpose of creating man; Rev. iv. 11, "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." God, from eternity, happy in himself, while yet there was nothing in being but himself, purposed, for his own glory, to make a world, with a variety of creatures therein, and among them man, the chief of the inferior creation, capable to love, serve, and obey him, and to enjoy him as the reward of his obedience, liable to punishment in case of disobedience.

2. A purpose of permitting man to fall, to leave him to the freedom of his own will, and not to hinder his falling away. God was not the cause of man's fall; for saith the apostle, James i. 13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." But had he not permitted, or willed not to hinder his fall, it could not have happened; Rev. iii. 7, "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth." This permission taking place in time, was then decreed from eternity; Eph. i. 11, "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Hereupon God foresaw the fall of man, how all mankind would be ruined in Adam by the breach of the covenant of works. And nothing being future, but all present to him, he saw and considered the whole race of mankind as lost, sunk as sinners into a gulph of misery, irremediable by any created hand whatsoever. This was the ground on which the mystery of God was raised; this gave occasion to the mystery and plan thereof in the eternal counsel.

*Secondly*, The mystery itself laid, in the eternal purpose, upon this ground. Wherein is to be observed,

1. The subject of the mystery, the restoration or recovery of

fallen man. This was the great business aimed to be carried on and finished in the completing of it; this was the grand affair that the thoughts of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were from eternity set upon; Psalm lxxxix. 19, "Thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people." Prov. viii. 31, "Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." 1 Pet. i. 2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." A mysterious point:

(1.) Considering there was no such design set on foot in favour of the fallen angels, though creatures of a superior dignity to man. Hence says the apostle, Heb. ii. 16, "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." These vessels of gold in the great house of God, fell down from their high station, and were so crushed that they became useless, unless they were cast anew. But God left them, and looked after them no more for ever. However, the vessel of earth, man, falling and breaking to pieces, God purposed to gather up the broken shreds, put them together again, and restore the earthen vessel. Who can fathom this mystery of his will? It is called, Tit. iii. 4, "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man," It will be the eternal admiration of elect men and angels.

2. The impediments that lay in the way of this restoration, from the holy and just nature of God, and the corrupt nature of man, unsurmountable by all created power, Had the project been communicated to men and angels, how to remove these impediments, all would have stood mute, as in a matter beyond their comprehension. Hence says our Lord, Isa. lxiii. 5, "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me."

(3.) The restoration of man was designed into a more excellent and honourable state than he fell from. Man fell in the first Adam, is restored in the second Adam; but the latter is infinitely preferable to the former; 1 Cor. xv. 47, "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second is the Lord from heaven," which necessarily infers the excellency and preference of men as his members, to what they were in the first Adam.

(4.) That there was nothing in the creature to move him to all this. No beauty remained in the fallen creature, nothing to be seen there but perverseness and enmity against God, which put him out of temper for seeking help of God. God had no need of man,

neither could he profit him. But he loved man, Tit. iii. 4, forecited. He so "loved him, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10. A mysterious point, to be resolved only into sovereign will and pleasure; Matth. xi. 26, "Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight."

2. The particular objects of the mystery, namely, the election, a select company of mankind; in which are,

(1.) The head-elect, the man Christ. He was the Father's elect one. Hence says Jehovah, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth;" his first choice, in whom the rest were chosen. Hence saith the apostle, Eph. i. 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world;" he to be the head, they to be the body; vers. 22, 23, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." That election fell on Christ both as the Son of God, Matth. xvii. 5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" and as the Son of man; Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people;" as a member of Adam's family, as well as of the heavenly family, Luke iii. And here was a mysterious point, a clean thing to be brought out of an unclean, a holy thing made of a woman, a daughter of fallen Adam. Hence saith the apostle, Gal. iv. 4, "God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law;" which the angel accounts for thus, Luke i. 35, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

(2.) The body elect, that is, a select number of mankind chosen out from among the rest, and given to Christ for the body to which he was to be head; Eph. i. 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." These were of the same corrupt mass with the rest of mankind, and might have been passed by as well as others; but God chose them to everlasting life, and gave them to Christ in the eternal decree for his; John xvii. 6, "I have manifested thy name to the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" while he reprobated, rejected, or passed by the rest. Here is a mystery, an awful mystery, which the apostle resolves into the sovereign dominion of God; Rom. ix. 21, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Who the persons are, is kept secret, and will be all along till the end of the world, at which time that matter will be laid wide open. Now, it is our business to obey the gospel; and none can know their election, till they have believed; then it may be concluded from the fruits of it. But no man's reprobation can be known, whether by himself or others, in this world, except in the case of sinning the sin against the Holy Ghost, which many doubt can now be fallen into; so whoever pretend to give marks of it, do but discover their dangerous rashness and inconsideration, and serve the interest of hell. Sure in this case the "secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever," Deut. xxix. 29.

3. The hand into which the management of the mystery was committed. That was Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the glorious Trinity; John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Him the Father appointed King in Zion, leader and commander to the people, the captain of salvation, to bring the designed sons unto glory. He was chosen for that end, and his commission designed him from eternity; in view of which he rejoiced before the world was, Prov. viii. 31, forecited.

A wonderful mystery, that the King's own Son was appointed repairer of the breach betwixt God and man, the Shepherd of Israel to gather together the stray sheep, and feed them. But less would not do; John iii. 16, For "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The slighting of Christ then is the slighting of the mystery of God as it was laid.

4. The method of carrying on the mystery. It was appointed to be carried on in a way surprising to men and angels, viz., That the Son of God was to be incarnate, come down into our world in our nature; was to be invested with the office of Priest, and die a sacrifice for sin, and then enter heaven again as the Intercessor, bringing his blood within the vail; with the office of a Prophet, to reveal the eternal counsels of peace, and by force of light to rescue the elect from the power of their spiritual darkness; and with the office of a King, to rescue them by strength of hand from the power of their enemies, and complete the happiness of the whole body elect.

A mysterious method, which makes the apostle cry out, 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory:" and which no man nor angel could have proposed. It

is only to be resolved into the infinite wisdom and free love of God. Which aggravates the guilt of the world's contempt of Christ.

5. The foundation of the mystery, on and according to which it was to proceed. That was the covenant of grace from eternity concluded betwixt the Father and the Son as second Adam; Psalm lxxxix. 3, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant;" "the counsel of peace that was between them both," Zech. vi. 13. A mysterious contract, wherein the Son bound himself to fulfil all righteousness the broken law could demand of the body elect, Matth. iii. 15. And the Father, on the other hand, promised thereupon a glorious reward to Christ himself, and eternal life to them, Phil. ii. 9; Tit. i. 2. It is the fulfilling of this covenant, in the performing of the condition, and in administering of it, that makes the mystery. And it is our personal entering into it in Christ, that brings us into the fellowship of the mystery; while those without the covenant are far from it.

6. *Lastly*, The great design and end of the mystery. It is the most glorious contrivance that ever was; and the design of it must be of proportionate worth and excellency. It is twofold.

1. The subordinate and nearest end. That is the salvation of the church of the elect; Luke xix. 10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" to save them from sin and wrath, and make them completely happy for ever. This is the point that the whole of the mystery terminates in; the design unto which every step of the divine conduct and management in the world is levelled. Vain and foolish men on whom the world smiles, are apt to think that the world is, and is managed for them; and they despise the godly, if they are mean and low, as for the most part they are; the church is the object of their contempt. But it is the business of the despised church that is the chief design of providence in the world. Other things are managed with relation to it, so as best to carry on their salvation. It is for their cause that crowns and sceptres are taken away and bestowed; Isa. xliii. 14, "Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer, the holy One of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Caldeans, whose cry is in the ships;" and for their sakes the world is kept up, the corn grows, grass springs, sun and moon are kept circling about, and time spun out; 2 Cor. iv. 15, "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God." And when there is no more use for them on their behalf, they shall be no more. That is a mysterious design, which the world cannot comprehend, and will not believe.

2. The chief and highest end. That is the glory of God; Rom. xi. 36, "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen;" the display of his glorious perfections in the eyes of his creatures. God made the world for this end; and therein he displayed his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. But in this mystery there is a far more ample display of manifold wisdom, rich goodness, and greater power, with exact justice, and riches of mercy and grace. More particularly,

It is the glory of God in his Son. He made the world through his Son, by his Spirit; but that glass represented only his glory of God in his first works. He designed to display his glory in the Son; and for that cause to prepare him a body, a human nature; his latter work a more stupendous work than the first; that the constellation of the divine perfections might together shine forth in him; Isa. xlix. 3, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." 2 Cor. iv. 6, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This is the end of the mystery of the divine conduct by Christ; John xiv. 13, "That the Father may be glorified in the Son," even in his deepest sufferings; chap. xiii. 31, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." And it is so far the design of God in the mystery, that God reckons not himself honoured at all but in his Son; chap. v. 22, 23, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." Whence appears the fatal mistake of blinded men dishonouring Christ, under pretence of honouring his Father; whereby they run quite counter to the chief design of the mystery of God, and fight against it, namely, the glory of God in his Son, the centre in which all the parts of the mystery were to meet.

Secondly, We shall consider the mystery of God as begun and carried on in time. Here we may view in the general,

1*st*, The opening of the mystery.

2*dly*, The gradual opening of it.

3*dly*, The progress of it.

*First*, We shall consider the first opening of the mystery. It lay hid from eternity in God, till Adam fell, and all the world was become guilty before God. Then upon that occasion the sealed book was opened, the mystery revealed, and begun to be executed in paradise. It was opened,

1. In the promulgation of the promise of the Gospel; Gen. iii. 15,

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." A surprising mystery to our guilty first parents, which they neither had nor could have had any hopes of; that the Son of God becoming man, the seed of the woman, should be bruised in the heel by the serpent; and bruise his head on the other hand, and so destroy the works of the devil.

2. In the offering of the first sacrifices, with the skins whereof our naked first parents were clothed, Gen. iii. 21. Thus was Christ held forth as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Thus the sinner's acceptance with God through an imputed righteousness, Rom. iii. 22.

Now Christ first entered on the execution of his office in the management of the mystery of God committed to him, Gen. iii. 8. He began the work, he has been all along since carrying it on, and has not yet finished it. He acted as a prophet, revealing the counsel of God touching man's salvation; as a king, in emitting his royal proclamations, offering his indemnity to rebel-man, and declaring war against the devil; and as a priest in the sacrifices offered.

*Secondly*, We shall consider the gradual opening of the mystery. Of this we have an account, Heb. i. 1, "God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." It was opened by degrees, now a piece and then a piece, till it was fully opened in the apostolic times. The patriarchal church had the morning of the opening of the mystery; Adam and Eve got the dawning of it in the revelation of Christ to them as the seed of the woman; and it still grew clearer by degrees. He was revealed afterwards as the seed of Abraham; thereafter as the seed of Isaac; and then the tribe was revealed that he was to come of, Judah; Gen. xlix. 10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

The Jewish church had the forenoon of it. To it the family he was to come of was determined, namely, the house of David, the place of his birth, Bethlehem. He was lively pointed out in the Levitical ordinances, and to him all the prophets bare witness. Moses witnessed his prophetical office; David speaks of his kingdom and priesthood. David, Isaiah, and others, spoke of his sufferings, resurrection, victory, and triumph. At length the Baptist pointed him out to their eyes, he being bodily present with them; but there was a mist before their eyes, that they knew him not, but fulfilled the scriptures in crucifying him.

The Christian church got the noon-day light of it, after Christ was ascended into heaven. Then the Spirit was poured out, the Gentiles were called, and made partakers of the mystery. Then was the mystery opened at the rate it had never been before, that the angels themselves saw more of it than ever they had seen. Hence saith the apostle, Eph. iii. 8—10, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." But yet it continued a mystery still.

*Thirdly*, We shall consider the progress of the mystery; concerning which in general we may notice three things.

1. It has never been interrupted since it began in paradise; the salvation of the church has all along been carried on, and matters managed for that end. Still the church has been continued in the world, sometimes more, sometimes less visible; Psalm xxix. 10, (Heb.,) "The Lord sat at the flood, and he hath sat king for ever."

2. It has made such progress, that by this time it is drawing towards the period of finishing it. The several generations of the patriarchal church of the elect, of the Jewish church, and seventeen generations of the Christian, are now wafted over to the promised land; the great manager having made the several dispensations they lived under, though some clearer, others darker, effectual for their salvation. The knowledge of the mystery is now spread far and wide, in comparison of what sometime it was. The prophecies are mostly fulfilled already; the prophecies of the flood, of the Egyptian bondage, the conquest of Canaan, the captivity of the ten tribes, the Babylonish captivity, the four monarchies, are all punctually fulfilled long ago. The prophecy of the coming of Christ, his death, resurrection, and ascension, put off about four thousand years, is near seventeen hundred years since accomplished. So is that of the rejection of the Jews, and the coming of Antichrist, fulfilled in our sight. And there are but a few that remain.

3. *Lastly*, It is going on in our day, in the same powerful hand that has managed it all along. Our Lord, who has picked out his own out of all former generations, and brought them to their happiness, is still drawing forth his own of this generation, out of the world lying in wickedness, taking them under his conduct, and guiding them towards Immanuel's land. And they are surely a vast

company that are got there already, through the progress made in the mystery.

But for a more full view of the mystery as executed in time, we shall consider the eight following particulars of this mysterious kingdom, in every part of which there is a mystery.

1*st*, The head of this kingdom.

2*dly*, The subjects of it.

3*dly*, The erection and conservation of it.

4*thly*, The seat of it.

5*thly*, The extent of it.

6*thly*, The privileges of it.

7*thly*, The life and practice of it.

8*thly*, The manner of the conduct and management of it.

1*st*, The head of it, Jesus Christ, is a mystery. And he is a mystery, a mysterious head,

1. In the constitution of his person, being God and man in one person. He was the eternal son of God, and in the fulness of time he became man, John i. 14, Gal. iv. 4. This is a mystery which dazzles the eyes of human reason, that cannot comprehend it; and because men have neither reach of reason enough to comprehend it, nor humility enough to take it on God's testimony, therefore there are so many infidels this day. But indeed it is a mystery that may attract and fix on it the wondering eyes of angels; the same person, the eternal God, and a man of seventeen hundred and thirty-two years; filling heaven and earth, and yet shut up nine months in a woman's dark womb; nourishing and feeding the whole creation, yet hanging at and sucking the breasts of Mary; upholding all by the word of his power, yet an infant that could not go, but behoved to be carried in her arms; infinite in perfections, not capable of addition, yet increasing in wisdom and stature; Lord of all, yet having nothing but what was given him for house or hold; the express image of the Father's person, yet accounted the reproach of men, and despised of the people; Lord of life, yet dying ignominiously on a cross.

2. In his offices. His prophetical office is a mystery. On earth he appeared a mean man, but revealing the secrets of the eternal counsels, as he that was in the Father's bosom; taught with the greatest simplicity of words and phrases, but with the greatest power, reaching the innermost parts of the soul; now in heaven, yet teaching on earth by his word and Spirit, to the rescuing of sinners from the power of their spiritual darkness. His priesthood is a mystery; dying on a cross as a malefactor, yet meanwhile offering himself a sacrifice for sin; now entered into heaven, presenting the blood of

his sacrifice, and interceding for his people. His kingdom is a mystery, in the setting it up, and whole management thereof in carrying it on.

3. In all circumstances about him. His birth was mysterious, as born of a virgin; his life was mysterious, the greatest power and dignity hid in it under the vail of a mean outward appearance; his death was mysterious; Acts iii. 15, "They killed the Prince of life." His resurrection, his ascension, and sitting at the Father's right hand, were mysterious.

2*dly*, The subjects of it, believers, are a mystery too. They are in the world, indeed, but unknown to the world; 1 John iii. 1. They are mixed with them in society yet are a "people that dwell alone; Numb. xxiii. 9. There are several mysterious things to be observed about them.

1. Though it is the most honourable of all kingdoms, yet those dignified to be the subjects of it, are for the most part persons of a mean figure, having the least outward advantages to recommend them. O what a mystery is that, 1 Cor. i. 26—28, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are!" If the Son of God was to have a kingdom on earth, one would have thought he would have pitched for the subjects of it upon those descended of noble and ancient families, the wise and learned, the potent, rich, and wealthy. But he hath done just the contrary; for he receives not honour from men.

2. There is a glory in them, hid under a thick vail of human infirmities, bodily and spiritual; Psalm xlv. 13, "The king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold." There is this difference betwixt them and others, that they wear their worst side utmost, others theirs inmost. They appear outwardly to the world for the most part very despicable; but in the inner man, each one resembles the children of a king. They are all fair in the eyes of God, even whom those worldly men that swell in pride, would scorn to set with the dogs in their flock.

3. They are a mystery in their constitution as Christians in this world. There is in them an old man, derived from the first Adam; and a new man, derived from the second Adam. Hence there is a mystery, two contrary parties, grace and corruption, struggling within them. The man has a will for, and a will against the same thing, at

one and the same time. Hence saith the apostle; Rom. vii. 20, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." The Christian has a being in himself, and a being out of himself. Hence he is so weak, that he can do nothing; yet so strong, that he can do all; Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things (says the apostle) through Christ which strengthened me." He has nothing, yet possesses all things; 2 Cor. vi. 10; and loaded with wants and imperfections, yet complete. Hence saith the apostle, Col. ii. 10, "Ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

3*dly*, The erection and conservation of it is a mystery; Luke xvii. 20, "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come; he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," *i. e.*, with outward shew. Earthly kingdoms are set up, and kept up with a great deal of noise, bustle, and parade. But it is not so here. Consider,

1. The beginnings of it were very small, how vastly soever it has spread. The first beginning of it was in paradise after the fall, where the King gained two subjects to begin his kingdom with under the Old Testament dispensation. The beginning of it under the New Testament dispensation was very small, Acts i. 15, being about an hundred and twenty persons, compared to "a handful of corn upon the top of mountains;" Psalm lxxii. 16, yet has it spread far and wide over the earth.

2. The means of erecting and setting it up, were very unlikely and unusual, viz. the despised preaching of the gospel; Psalm cx. 2, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." Isa. ii. 3, "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." First of all Christ preached it himself, to our first parents under the Old Testament, and then under the New, to the Jews; and then he sent out his apostles. What a mystery was this, being to erect a kingdom, he sends not out an army to fight, to get him subjects by the power of the sword; but a few men to preach the gospel of the kingdom! For them he goes not to the schools, thence to fetch men of learning and breeding whom he might so employ; but to the sea-coasts where he takes fishermen from their boats and nets, to send them out on this errand!

3. The opposition to it from the beginning has been very great; yet it has made its way, and continued all along without interrup-

tion, over the belly of all the opposition. The powers of earth and hell have still been engaged against it, yet could never prevail to raze it. All the four monarchies were one after another heavy on it, yet has it outlived them all; the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, has broken in pieces the iron, brass, clay, silver, and gold.

4. The means of keeping it up, even such as it was set up by. Not the power of the sword; they make the kingdom of Christ no mystery that breathe nothing but fire and sword, war and blood, to maintain and propagate it; but the preaching and teaching of the word of the gospel, and setting that home on men's consciences; prayers, and tears, patient suffering even unto death; Rev. xii. 11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." These and the like are the appointed, proper means for maintaining the kingdom of Christ, which make it a mysterious kingdom; though I do not think that Christianity obliges men to throw up their civil privileges, or takes away their natural right of necessary self-defence.

*4thly*, The seat of it is a mystery too. The seats of kingdoms and empires of this world are most conspicuous, being the capital cities of them; there they keep their courts, thence they issue out their royal commands. But the seat of this mysterious kingdom is hid from the eyes of all men on earth; for it is in the highest heavens, at the Father's right hand; Psalm cx. 1. There he keeps his court, there he grants petitions, thence he issues out his royal commands. This is a mystery; but what makes it more so,

1. The meanest of his subjects, in whatever part of his dominion on earth, has immediate access to the throne, with their complaints, petitions, &c., and that though they be not able to stir a foot, but are fixed to a bed or seat. It is hard for the most part to travel with their suits to their earthly princes; and when they are got to the court, they must be introduced by some courtier. But to this King the subjects may have access without moving their bodies at all, and go straight forward without noticing saint or angel; though the Papists think that presumption, making Christ's kingdom like a worldly one, so destroying the mystery. The proto-martyr Stephen, when he died, addressed Christ directly, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But faith does it.

2. He sees all that is in his kingdom with his own eyes, good or bad, person or thing; Prov. v. 21, "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings." Kings of the earth must needs see with other men's eyes, and hear with other men's ears; but Zion's King is himself witness to all, needs

no information, and is liable to no mistakes. There is never a good thing any of his subjects do how secretly soever, but he sees it; never a groan they give, but he hears it; he knows all the circumstances of their case. And there is never an ill thing his enemies do, but he is witness to it.

3. As far off as his throne is where he sits, he is ever present with his people for all that, and will be; Matth. xxviii. 20, "Lo, I am with you always (says he) even unto the end of the world." He is not only a help, but "a present help in time of trouble;" Psalm xlvi. 1. A great mystery; but faith can unriddle it, believing him to be God as well as man, and therefore every where present; though the heavens must contain him till the day of the restitution of all things.

5*thly*, The extent of it is a mystery, whether it is considered,

1. In respect of the kinds of jurisdiction he has in it.

(1.) The kingdom of grace is in his hand. He is a despised Christ in the world, he was crucified as a blasphemer and seditious person in it; yet all the grace and favours of heaven, to the salvation of mortals, relative or real, are in his hand to dispense; and they can come by them no way, but only through him; Eph. i. 22. For God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

(2.) The kingdom of glory is in his hand too. Hence he said to his disciples; Luke xxii. 29, 30, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

(3.) The kingdom of providence is in his hand likewise. Zion's King is King of the world; the government of the world is lodged by the Father in the same hand the government of the church is; John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Compare Isa. xliii. 14, 15, "Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer, the holy one of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the Lord, your holy One, the Creator of Israel your King." This is a great mystery; his kingdom is a despised one, yet a nonsuch kingdom; he is higher than the kings of the earth, who are all his vassels, though they pay him little regard.

2. In respect of the bounds of it. It extends itself over both worlds. Hence says Christ, Matth. xxviii. 18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." Rev. i. 18, "I have the keys of hell and of death." The mystery is a-carrying on through this

world; there he is gathering his elect out of the kingdom of the devil, by the gospel, ruling and defending them all against their enemies. In the other world, he has the eternal rest for his kindly subjects, and the prison for his enemies. And in the passage betwixt the two worlds, viz. death, it is carried on in perfecting the happiness of the saints, and the misery of the wicked. So it is a great mystery, whereof we see little as it is in this world, and nothing as it is in the other, but by faith.

*6thly*, The privileges of it are a mystery. What a mystery was the man Christ going up and down in a mean outward condition in the world, yet the only begotten of the Father! John i. 14. Such a mystery are believers in their measure, privileged above the greatest on earth who wear the crowns; though going in rags, privileged above those going in shining apparel. They have mysterious privileges.

1. Their union with Christ is a mystery; Eph. v. 32. Every the meanest believer is truly united to Christ; John. xv. 5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." A wonderful mystery; the head in heaven in the fulness of glory, yet the members on earth in a low afflicted condition; beset with wants, yet complete in him; crucified with him, and so dead, yet living; groaning under the remains of corrupt nature, yet in him partakers of the divine nature, as being one spirit, or of one spiritual nature with him; 1 Cor. vi. 17, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit."

2. Their justification is a mystery. They are pardoned, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, yet all "their righteousness as filthy rags;" Isa. lxiv. 6. How can that be? Why, the mystery lies here, in that there is an imputation of God's righteousness to them, what he was, did, and suffered. Hence we read, Rom. iii. 22, of "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ," being unto all, and upon all them that believe." The disputers of this world laugh at this as a putative way of justification, as if one should pretend to be warm by the clothes on another's back, or full with the meat in another's belly. They think justification by our obedience to the new gospel law is a rational way; thus they make it no mystery.

2. Their sanctification is a mystery. Vain men conceive the sanctification of a sinner to be by vigorous exercise of their rational faculties, to correct their vicious habits, and practise virtue. But sanctification by union with Christ through faith, the only way of the sanctification of a sinner, 1 Cor. i. 2, Acts xxvi. 18, is such a mystery as was unknown to the Jewish Rabbies and Greek philosophers, and an imaginary sanctification in the eyes of all legalists;

but the truth is, the sanctification of a sinner is no less a mystery than his justification.

4. Their perseverance in grace is a mystery; grace keeping still its ground in the heart, amidst all the strength of corruption within and temptation without, till at length overcoming all, it issueth certainly in glory. That is no less a mystery, than would be a candle burning still in the wind, and laying the wind at length; a spark of fire keeping alive in the ocean, yea drying up the ocean at length; a worm thrashing the mountains, yea at length beating them small as dust, Isa. xli. 14, 15. But the mystery of it lies, in that the covenant is everlasting, they have the perpetual intercession of Christ, and indwelling of his Spirit.

7*thly*, The life and practice of it is a mystery. The life of every believer or subject of this kingdom is a mystery. They are God's hidden ones, and their life is a hidden life. Col. iii. 3, "Your life," says the apostle, "is hid with Christ in God;" which the world neither sees nor can understand. Hence says Solomon, Prov. xiv. 10, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." They may see the outward appearance of it; but it is "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 4.

This mysterious life is the life of faith, opposite to the life of sense and self, whereby the man lives out of himself, on things not seen; as the apostle describes it; Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The man living this life, stands on borrowed legs; sees with borrowed eyes; does every duty, and bears every burden, in and with borrowed strength; and when he has done all, counts all his doings and sufferings dross and dung; Christ being all to him, and himself nothing. Hence saith Paul, Phil. iii. 8, 9, "Yea doubtless and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things; and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Hence there is no duty so easy, nor burden so light, but he owns he is not man enough for it; yet none so difficult, nor heavy, but he will venture on it at the Lord's call. A mysterious life and practice. "But our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5.

8*thly*, The manner of the conduct and management of it is a mystery. Kings of the earth have their secrets of government; but they are but trifles in comparison of the mysteries of God's government by Christ in the world. The maxims of government in the kingdom of Christ, and the manner of his management and conduct are vastly different from those of the powers on earth; Isa. lv. 8, 9, "For my thoughts," says the Lord, "are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Some of these mysterious pieces of management follow. It is the manner of this kingdom,

1. To prefer the most unlikely, baulking them that stand fairest for the preference in all human appearance; Matth. xx. 16, "The last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen." There is a thread of this method going through the whole economy of grace. Abel the youngest is preferred to Cain, Shem to Japheth his elder brother, Jacob to Esau, Ephraim to Manasseh, Moses to Aaron, three years older than he, Exod. vii. 7. David to seven brethren elder than he. He calls the foolish and the base things of the world, passing by the wise, mighty, and noble, 1 Cor. i. 26—28, forecited. The mysteries of the kingdom are hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes, Matth. xi. 25. When the gospel is to be preached, the Jews must have the the first offer; they must begin at Jerusalem, where Christ was crucified: for the design is to exalt the riches of grace.

2. To let things go to an extremity, to the utmost point of hopelessness, before a hand to be put to help them, and set them right again. Hence said Moses, Deut. xxxii. 36, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." Pharoah shall not only enslave the Israelites, but proceed to drown their males, before Moses their deliverer is born; their bondage shall be harder than ever, ere they are out of Egypt. When they are out, they are beset on all hands, and he seems to have them in a horse-net, ere he and they are freely parted. Haman carried his plot so far against the Jews, that the decree was passed, the letters of execution writ, and the posts dispatched with them, before there was a turn. It is a maxim with men, to crush things in their beginnings, because they may prove too strong for them afterwards; but our Lord takes the contrary method, to glorify the power of his hand.

3. To give the sharpest treatment to the greatest favourites. This is not the manner of men, but it is the manner of God. Hence

said the psalmist, Psalm lxxiii. 5, 14, "They (the wicked) are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. For all the day long have I (Asaph, a saint) been plagued, and chastened every morning." Never was one treated so hardly as the Son of the Father's bosom. And it is the ordinary method, that the favourites of Heaven are cast down to the dust, while his enemies are lifted up on high; the former sigh while the latter sing. John Baptist is in the prison, while the incestuous Herodias is at a ball; her daughter danceth, and John Baptist's head is cut off, and brought in a charger to the incestuous woman to triumph over it. They have little skill of the mystery of God, that from their outward ease and prosperity gather the special love of God to them. On the contrary, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," Heb. xii. 6. As little skill have they that conclude the greatest sufferers are certainly the greatest sinners. If it be so, the apostles were the worst of men; "For I think (says Paul) that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," 1 Cor. iv. 9.

4. To meet men with astonishing strokes going in the way that God bade them, while they have a fair sunshine that are going in the way of their own hearts. Hence said Solomon, Eccl. viii. 14, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the word of the wicked; again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." Jacob was bidden return to his own country; but what storms rose on him by the way, one after another! Moses was bid go to Egypt on God's errand, yet he was in hazard of his life; but Jonah flying to Tarshish got a ship as ready to take him in as he could have wished. People are ready to judge of other men's actions, according to the outward aspect of providence on them: a most uncertain and dangerous rule, which cannot miss of making them condemn the generation of the righteous, and bless them whom the Lord abhoreth.

5. To lay by accepted petitions, and let them long lie by, time after time, while yet unacceptable requests are quickly granted. The people lusted after flesh, and they soon got their desire; they were bent for a king, and they soon got their desire in that too. But how many cries to heaven were among the Old Testament saints for the coming of the Messias, a promised mercy, which yet were not answered till some thousands of years were run. God, while he flings a mercy to a carnal man uneasy for it, will let his elect cry to him night and day for their mercies ere they get them;

Luke xviii. 7. And many a long process they may have before the throne depending many a year, ere they get their answer; as is evident in the case of Abraham for a seed; yea, they may be carried off the stage ere they be answered, as in the case of the cloud of witnesses, Heb. xi. 13, who all died in faith, not having received the promises. And yet after all they are accepted, and the gracious answer is determined for them.

6. To answer accepted prayers quickly with some one terrible thing or other, which yet are to be graciously and bountifully answered in due time. Hence said the psalmist, Psalm lxv. 5, "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation." The woman of Canaan got repeated trials of this, Matth. xv. 22—28. Moses and Aaron go in at God's command to Pharoah, to demand his letting Israel go; and no doubt they prayed for success ere they went; but instead of that, immediately Israel's case is made far worse than ever, Exod. v. Immediately providence takes a run directly contrary to what they had been praying for; this made Moses himself stagger, as ye see, vers. 22, 23, "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharoah to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered the people at all." If at any time ye have been praying for a mercy with particular concern and seriousness, and quickly after providence seems to fly in the face of your prayers, be not so weak and so ill seen in the mystery of God, as to think, Now, that is Heaven's final answer; no, it is but a trial, very usual in the mystery of God; which, if ye learn not by hearing, you will be fair to get taught you by experience.

7. To muster up various impediments, make many embarrassments, and set up iron gates, in the way of some great good thing that is to be done for a person, a favourite of heaven. This was taught by the apostles, Acts xiv. 22, who were employed in confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Some get their mercies with a great deal of ease, they drop into their lap like ripe fruit off the tree of common providence. But the children of the covenant come not so easily by theirs; and the greater the mercy is, readily the more and greater are the difficulties in the way thereof. Esau and his posterity were soon and easily settled in Edom, the land appointed for them; but it was many a year after ere Jacob's posterity was settled in Canaan, the land appointed for them; and they fought many bloody battles

before it. Abraham had the promise of a son; but behold the barrenness of his wife is rolled in the way of the promise; and as if that had not been enough, he and she both grew so old, that it ceased to be with her after the manner of women. Much a like was it with Zecharias and Elizabeth, Luke i. 18. But this is for the honour of God, in making the iron gates open of their own accord, and bringing the promised mercy over the belly of the impediments.

8. To set things on a run to bring in a mercy promised; and then when it comes to the point, that one is just expecting to receiving it, suddenly to cause a stop, and make a turn that makes it quite hopeless-like. When the Messias appeared, there were great hopes among the believing Jews of a glorious time for Israel; and these were not vain, but they suddenly met with a shock; the Messias was crucified, dead, and buried; that made some of them like to loose all their hopes. Hence said the two disciples that were going to Emmaus; Luke xxiv. 21, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." This is a very ordinary piece of the divine conduct, the mystery of God, first, as it were, to pass the sentence of death on a promised mercy, to bury and lay the gravestone on it, and then to raise it up, and bring it in. David had the promise of the kingdom; he is sent for to court, has Saul's favour, is made general by him, gains the hearts of the people, 1 Sam. xviii. Now things were on a run towards the accomplishing of the promise. But behold, this run is suddenly stopped; Saul seeks his life, he is for many years hunted like a partridge on the mountains, thinks one day he will fall by the hands of Saul, and says in his haste, Psalm cxvi. 11, "All men are liars." So Moses being bred up in the court of Pharoah, had a secret intimation that he would be the man who would deliver Israel. Accordingly, when he was forty years old, he sets himself to the work, Exod. ii. 11, &c.; but it misgives in his hand, and he is in hazard of his life, and is forced to flee the country, and for forty years after he lives retired in Midian, Acts vii. 23, &c., by which time it would seem he had lost all hope of the matter. Yet was the work done in its due time. Such seems to have been the case with Zecharias, as ye will see, Luke i. 13, compared with ver. 18.

9. When a promised mercy is to be brought about, to lay by the most likely and promising instruments, from whence one has his expectation. It is a piece of the mystery of God, in that case, to loose their gripes one after another, till in end they have nothing left to gripe to but God himself in his word. Hence said the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 9, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the

dead." Before Israel should conquer Canaan, all the men of war, among them behoved to be consumed and dead, Deut. ii. 16. Joseph had a fair prospect of deliverance, when he so signally obliged a courtier, Pharoah's chief butler; but the ungrateful man never minded him, Gen. xl. 43. But the Lord doth this, that his own hand in the mercy may appear the more eminent; and he loves to employ unlooked-for means, and unexpected instruments. So our Lord Jesus let the boats go away, but came walking on the sea, to the relief of his distressed disciples. He says sometimes to instruments of a good work, Hitherto shall you go, but no further. The great and good Moses, that singular instrument for good to Israel, must be laid by, before they enter Canaan.

10. To make use of hindrances of good things for furtherances thereof. Hence said Paul to the Philippians, chap. i. 12, "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." It was meet that Paul the apostle of the Gentiles should be at Rome, then the chief city of the world, to preach the gospel there. He often purposed it, but was disappointed. Hence he said, Rom. i. 13, "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." How got he thither? Why, there was a mob raised on him by the Jews, he was taken prisoner by the Romans, tossed from hand to hand, till he was obliged to appeal to Cæsar, and then the Romans carried him to Rome. Jacob was brought into heavy case, by what befel his son Joseph; but behold, that was the means of the support of him and his family. Hence said he on his death-bed, Gen. xlix. 24, "His bow [Joseph's] abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel." In the mystery of God there is frequent working by contraries; providence driving straight forward to the designed point, while it seems to us to be going quite against it. Christ cures the blind man putting clay on his eyes; Haman goes unto the King to get Mordecai hanged, and by that very means is brought to lead him through the city on horseback, in the greatest pomp and splendour. Had not Joseph been put in the prison, he had not come to the court.

11, *Lastly*, To give weak backs heavy burdens to bear. Hence saith the apostle; 1 Cor. i. 27, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty." Thus he chose his apostles fishermen, to set up his kingdom in the

world, combat the learning of the schools, and the force of them who had the power of the sword. The apostle unriddles this mystery; 2 Cor. iv. 7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." While he makes a worm thrash the mountains, to beat them small, the greater is the glory of the mighty hand that does it with such a flail; Isa. xli. 14, 15. When Peter was a young man, able to bear hardships, he was at ease; but when old and less able, he got sore ones. Hence said our Lord to him, John xxi. 18, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." If as the back grows weaker, the burdens to bear are increased, it is but an ordinary piece of management in the mystery of God; which accounts for that order; Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Many such things are in the mystery of God; but these condescended on shall serve for a swatch.

*Thirdly*, We are to consider the mystery of God as finished with time. And here I shall shew,

1*st*, When it shall be finished.

2*dly*, Wherein the finishing of it lies.

3*dly*, The import and consequence of this finishing.

*First*, Let us consider when this mystery of God shall be finished.

1. It will be in the days of the voice of the seventh angel. Now it is plain, the days of the seventh angel are come already; but then under it are comprehended the seven vials; and we are come the length of the third or fourth vial. So that the finishing period of the mystery of God is now running, and is well far on. The morning and mid-day of the mystery is past, the afternoon of it well far spent, and we are in the time drawing near to the evening of it.

2. It will get the finishing stroke with the end of time; and time and it will end together. It will not be carried on beyond time, and time will not end till it be done. Hence saith the apostle; 1 Cor. xv. 24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power." At one and the same period, the world will end, and time with it, and the mystery of God finished withal.

3. But the precise time of this event is kept a secret from all men; which none of them are able to discover, nor should they in-

quire into. Hence said our Lord; Matth. xxiv. 36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." And saith Paul, 1 Thess. v. 2, "For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." It is so ordered on design to guard men against security, and to oblige them to watch. Hence saith the exalted Redeemer; Rev. xvi. 15, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

*Secondly*, Wherein does the finishing of this mystery lie? It lies in these three things following:—

1. The accomplishment of the remaining prophecies. These are but few; the principal whereof are, the calling of the Jews, and the total destruction of Antichrist. That the Jews are to be called, is evident from Rom. xi. 25, 26, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." And who can consider, that though this people have been rooted out of their own land, and scattered among the nations more than sixteen hundred years, and yet remain a distinct people still, not incorporated with nor sunk in other nations, but they are reserved by special providence for this notable event? And so much of the prophecies of the downfal of the Antichristian kingdom is already accomplished, as insures the total destruction thereof, according to the remaining part anent it.

2. The gathering in of all the elect. There is a certain number chosen to life; those that remain of them yet unborn, must be born into this world, till the last person of that blessed roll is come forth. And they must also be born again, and brought by faith into the kingdom of Christ. And then when the last elect man or woman is born, and withal brought to Christ, the mystery is on the very point of finishing.

3. The completing of the salvation of the church of the elect. That was the end for which the mystery was laid before time in the eternal counsel; and that being obtained, it is finished; 1 Cor. xv. 24, forecited. Hereto belongs the resurrection of their bodies, the destroying of death the last enemy, and the presenting of the whole company of the elect, from the first to the last man, spotless before the throne. Hence saith Paul; Eph. v. 25, 27, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any

such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." And, saith Jude, ver. 24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," &c. This is the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father, mentioned, 1 Cor. xv. 24.

*Thirdly*, It remains to shew the import and consequence of this finishing the mystery of God. It is of greatest importance to the honour of God, and to the children of men. For then,

1. The eternal purpose of God concerning mankind is fulfilled; the contrivance laid from eternity in the depth of wisdom about them, is executed. From eternity the scheme was formed, the draught was made, and then the building is reared up actually in conformity thereto, the head-stone is laid upon it.

2. The covenant betwixt the Father and Christ the second Adam is then fulfilled on both hands. In it there was a condition to be fulfilled by Christ. This he did complete near seventeen hundred years ago, paying the debt of the whole elect world. And there were promises on the Father's part to be fulfilled on the performing of that condition. A great part of these yet remain to be fulfilled; but then it will be done completely; and the promises be made good in every point to the head and to the members.

3. Then the whole frame of the ordinances, now or since Adam's fall, in use in the world, for bringing in of sinners, and edifying of saints, is laid by. No more church-assemblies, word and sacraments, church-government and discipline, nor church-officers; these are as the scaffolding all to be taken down, now that the house is built; Eph. iv. 11—13, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. In these it was that the mystery of God was carried on; but the mystery being finished, there is no more need of them; but they will not be missed by them, who have through them been brought into the fellowship of the mystery. Hence saith John of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 22, "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it."

4. Then the manner of the divine conduct towards mankind is altered so, that it is quite new; Rev. xxi. 5, "He that sat upon the throne, said, "Behold, I make all things new." There will be no trials and afflictions of the godly, and no more prosperity of the wicked, as now. Now is the mixed dispensation; then comes the

unmixed one, that where it is well, it is perfectly well; where ill, it is absolutely ill. An eternal sunshine then cheers the godly, without the least intercepting cloud; and an eternal gloom sits down on the wicked, without the lest gleam of light.

5. Then Christ's conquest is complete, his enemies made his footstool, which he is this day in expectation of. Heuce saith the apostle; Heb. x. 12. 13. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." Then shame covers the faces of all that opposed and slighted him; their profane tongues that they used in contempt of him, and his holy religion, are silent in darkness; the serpent's head is quite bruised away, and his works utterly destroyed; and he, and sinners that believed him to their ruin, are together shut up in the pit. Then Christ and his followers have a total victory over sin, Satan, death, and the present evil world.

6. Then begins the eternal marriage-feast to be held in the kingdom of God, when Jesus Christ, the glorious bridegroom, has brought home his bride, believers now espoused to him, Matth. xxv. 10. The plenty, the glory, and the pleasure of that feast mortals cannot comprehend; for "in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. 11. Some sips and drops his people get now and then, more relishing than any of the dreggy pleasures of this world; but still there is a vail betwixt us and it so that we cannot know it.

7. Then the door is shut, Matth. xxv. 10. No access more, knock who will. No refuser of Christ will then, though he may now, have liberty to take his word again; the mystery is finished, of which God's bearing so long with sinners makes a great part; but as God's shutting in Noah was the barring out of those that were out; so the espoused to Christ being set down, there is no access for new guests.

8. Then the world ends, 1 Cor. xv. 24, forecited. The world is kept up for the sake of the carrying on of the mystery of God in it; and had it not been for that cause, it had been overthrown at Adam's fall; but then the mystery being finished, there is no more use for it; so fire is set to it as the stage of wickedness, a cursed world, wherein God has been so long dishonoured.

9. Then the mystery is opened, and appears in a full light; though before vailed, the vail is then taken off. The saints were often puzzled with the difficulties of it; but then they shall all be unfolded and laid open to them, to the clearing of them, in a suitableness to the divine perfections, and becomingness to the divine wisdom,

justice, and goodness, to their eternal joy and consolation. Hence saith the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I also am known." The wicked despised the mystery, drew conclusions from it as it appeared to them, to their own ruin; but then it will be so far opened to them, as they will see it worthy of God to their eternal shame and confusion. Hence saith the prophet, Mic. vii. 16, "The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might; they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf."

10. *Lastly*, There will be no more mystery of God; then it is finished. It is for the exercise and trial of faith, that matters are carried on in that mysterious manner now; but then faith gives place to sight and sense. Not that ever men will be able fully to comprehend the mystery; but as far as the saints' capacity reacheth, it is cleared unto them; and the wicked will be no more liable to mistake as to the way of the Lord's dealing with them.

II. We shall consider the relation betwixt the mystery of God and time. We take it up in these two particulars.

1. Time is the space appointed for the mystery of God its being executed. It was in all the parts of it laid indeed in the eternal counsels before time; the effects of it, or the state it will bring mankind into, and keep them in, will be to everlasting, when time is no more; but the execution of it, the beginning, carrying on, and finishing it, is in time; time bounds that before and behind. The mystery is a building of God, wherein many hands are employed; the pattern of it was drawn from eternity; it will be inhabited through eternity; but the building of it belongs entirely to time; in it the foundation was laid, and in it the copestone will be laid on.

2. The subsistence or continuation of time depends on the mystery. Hence are the words of the text, the angel "sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time no longer, but the mystery of God should be finished." The mystery must be carried on and finished, take what time it will; therefore time must wait on it, till it be done. Being done there is no more use for time, and so it ends. So it is for the sake of the mystery of God, not for the trifling concerns of men, that time is lengthened out. Had there been no mystery of God to have been carried on, time once polluted with sin, had ended soon after it began.

Use 1. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. Whence it comes to pass, that there is so much stumbling of wicked men at the divine conduct by Christ in the world. They can see no beauty in it, they cannot receive it, they are offended at

it, they improve it to ruining purposes against themselves. This obtains so universally, that our Saviour pronounces, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me," Matth. xi. 6. The matter is; it is a mystery, and their natural blindness hinders them to see it, so that they know it not; 1 Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They stumble at the doctrinal part of the mystery; for there is in it what their reason cannot comprehend; and because it is so, many of them professedly reject it, 1 Tim. iii. 16. They stumble at the providential part of it; Mal. iii. 15, "And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness, are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." That is a mystery too, which one needs the light of the sanctuary to let him into. Hence saith the Psalmist, Psalm lxxiii. 16, 17, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end."

2. How the godly come to have other thoughts of it; and true Christians admire the beauty and glory of it, which carnal men despise. It is the mystery of God, which he reveals to his friends and fearers of his name; Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." John xv. 15, "Henceforth," saith Christ, "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." They are let into the secret which others are not, and they get eyes to see what the sharpest eye of unsanctified reason cannot perceive; Mark iv. 11, "Unto you (saith our Lord to his disciples) it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Therefore they ought to be thankful and humble, posing themselves with that question, Who maketh thee to differ? The babes see what the wise and prudent cannot discern, because the Father has revealed the same to the one, and hid them from the other, Matth. xi. 25.

3. No reason to despise religion, because the world generally do so. Religion is a mystery; the world is a blind world, and the blind cannot judge of colours. No body despises it, but those who know it not; and it is rashness with a witness to condemn what one knows not, Psalm ix. 10, John iv. 10. It is true, carnal men have an understanding as well as others, and in many instances of deeper reach than others; but still it is but a natural understanding, that is not competent for the mystery of God, which cannot be taken up

but with a new understanding. Hence saith the apostle, 1 John v. 20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." It is the king's favourites that are let in to the secrets of the government, not every body.

4. Time is not continued as a sleep without a design. The secure sleeping world look on time as a thing that runs on by a necessity of nature; and because they see now a new day still succeeding the foregoing one, they think in effect it will always be so. They consider not the design of God in continuing it, wherefore the sun and the moon make so many rounds, why one day as yet still comes after another; but are apt to say, as 2 Pet. iii. 4, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." O that men would consider that it is lengthened out on a particular design, which being compassed, it shall end for good and all!

5. It is not this world's business, but heaven's business, that is the great design of the continuing of time. Ye are mistaken, if ye think that the sun rises again, the new seed-time comes, &c., just that ye may go to your work, and till and sow, &c. Nay, it is that the mystery of God may be carried on; and these things have no place but as appendages of the mystery of God; and true Christians will manage them so. Hence is that exhortation, Col. iii. 17, "And whatsoever ye do in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Much less is it that men may carry on their mysteries of iniquity, which is almost the only thing that some profligate sinners use their time for. But dreadful will their reckoning be, that spend in carrying on their mysteries of iniquity, that time that is designed for carrying on the mystery of God.

6. The mystery of God must be a matter of singular excellency, and of the last importance, that for it time is continued. It is so indeed, for the honour of God. Hereby there is a revenue of glory raised to him in this world, wherever that mystery is declared: and as to those places wherein it is not heard of, true believers honour him in entertaining awful thoughts of his sovereignty, and the unsearchableness of his judgments, in keeping it wholly up from those places, reverently waiting the opening of that part of the mystery. But all these are but gleanings; the full harvest of glory to God from the mystery comes at the finishing of it. It is so likewise to mankind; for upon that mystery depends their eternal state of weal or wo, according as they receive or slight it.

7. The mystery of God has, in the execution of it, been of long

continuance; but it is drawing to a close. It was begun in paradise, in the promulgation of the first gospel that was ever heard in the world, Gen. iii. 15. Several thousands of years have past since in carrying it on. Many a time the world has been heartily weary of it, wishing to have it at an end; not considering that time must end with it; so that could they have effectuate it, they would have but drawn down the house on their own heads. And perhaps the Christian world was never more weary of it than at this day. But it is drawing to a close now; and at the period God has fixed for its end, it will be finished.

8. *Lastly*, When there is no more time requisite for the mystery of God, there will be no more time for other things neither; time will end with it; for it is for the sake of it that time is continued.

Use 2. Of reproof; and that to those,

1. Who will have no mysteries in religion, but all within the reach of human reason. However, according to the scripture, it is a bundle of mysteries, Matth. xiii. 11; hid from the wise, chap. xi. 25. The foundation of practical religion is a mystery, Eph. v. 32. The practice of it is a mystery, Col. iii. 3, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless yet I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." See 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." What reason can be assigned, why our God may not take trial of man, in believing him on his bare word, as well as obeying him on the mere intimation of his will?

2. Those who despise the gospel, as a weak and mean thing, looking on it with disdain as foolishness, as it was to the Jews and Greeks, 1 Cor. i. 23. A dangerous adventure; a despising of the mystery of God, the mystery of his wisdom, ver. 24. They will be confounded at the finishing of the mystery.

3. Those who improve it not, to the proper end of revealing it to them; *i. e.* the salvation of the soul; like those invited to the marriage of the king's son, who "made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise," Matth. xxii. 5. This is a neglect insuring ruin; Heb. ii. 3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Use 3, *Last*, Of exhortation. And,

1. Be not rash in passing judgment on the state of affairs in the world, while you see the seeming confusions in your own case, of

others, or of the church. Wait the finishing of the mystery. Then you will see surprising sights; particularly,

(1.) An admirable harmony betwixt jarring providences and promises. They will meet in close agreement; and it will appear that there never was any real discord between them; but that providence took the best way towards the accomplishing of the promises; Deut. xxxii. 4, "God is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."

(2.) A beautiful agreeableness of smiling providences in the case of the wicked, to the divine perfections. By these will appear the goodness, patience, &c., of God without any the least marring of the divine faithfulness in the threatening. Hence said Abraham to the rich man; Luke xvi. 25, "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." And saith the prophet; Isa. iii. 11, "Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

(3.) The base believers who took the mystery on trust fully satisfied; the wise and prudent who would believe no farther than they saw, confounded; 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Matth. xxii. 12, "And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."

2. Improve the mystery while you have it, before it be finished; for if once it be finished, there will be no more method of grace and salvation for sinners. The gospel is the last ship for Immanuel's land. It will be finished in itself with time; but to you with the end of your time.

(1.) Earnestly seek of God by his Spirit the revelation of the mystery to you, the saving knowledge of it; Matth. xiii. 11, forecited. For no man can have it without the Spirit; 1 Cor. ii. 14, forecited,

(2.) Rest not till ye be brought into the fellowship of the mystery; Eph. iii. 9. By the gospel ye are called unto it; 1 Cor. i. 9, and by faith brought into it; 1 John i. 3.

(3.) *Lastly*, Carry always with you in remembrance the finishing of the mystery, and time with it; that you may be inured to look on the present state of affairs as passing, and to look for all things new.

## WALKING BY FAITH NOT BY SIGHT.*

[The first sermon on this text.]

2 Cor. v. 7,

*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

In the preceding words we find a notable mystery of the Christian life, viz. it is a groaning life, vers. 2, 4, and yet a life of confidence, wherein one is of good cheer, as safe and comfortable, ver. 6. But if Christians are so confident, and of so good cheer, why do they groan? They are burdened, under a body of sin and death, a load of trials and afflictions. And burdened folk must groan; ay, and they may groan, and yet not grudge; for Christ himself was a groaner, but not a grudger, as we find John xi. 33, "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." But then if they groan so heavily, how are they confident and of good cheer? how can these consist? Very well, says the apostle, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Faith's prospect keeps up the heart, while sight and sense of the hardships of the way makes us groan; and we steer our course by the former, not by the latter. In the words we have,

1. The present state and condition of the saints in this world; they are in the way, as travellers; "We walk." The saints in heaven, and the damned in hell, are come to their journey's end; they are, as to their bodies, in their long home; as to their souls, in their eternal home. We here are on the way; the wicked, some running, some stealing, on the way to destruction; the saints on their way to heaven, groaning and pressing forward. The company before them is triumphant, the company with them militant; they are not yet got home, but they are on the way.

2. How they direct their course while in the way, for safety and comfort; for their road through this world is dangerous and gloomy, as in a wilderness. And positively,

1. "By faith." They that are before them in heaven, manage themselves by sight; for their sight cannot deceive; every thing appears there in its true colours, and their sight discerns every thing as it is. The rest of the travellers through the world walk by sight; but sight and sense in the world are deceitful things; for there are many false appearances there, which whoso follow fall headlong into the dark dungeon of destruction. But their Father has given them faith's

* The substance of three sermons, preached at Maxton Communion, June 29 and 30, and at Ettrick, July 7, 1728.

prospect to walk by; and that discovers things worldly sight cannot reach, and correct the mistakes of it in things it does reach; and in some measure it supplies the want of heavenly sight, giving a view of things not seen; Heb. xi. 1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

2. Negatively, "Not by sight." The word does not formally denote the sight seeing, but the sight seen; that is, the outward shape of things, the appearance they make to our sight, sense, and carnal reason. Hence it is rendered "shape;" John v. 37, "And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape and "appearance;" 1 Thess. v. 22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Now, that appearance of things is the guide in the way to carnal men; by it they take their marks, and are led to ruin. The saints forgetting themselves, sometimes take their mark by it too, and they smart for it; but their habitual deliberate course is not directed by it.

Doctrine. They that would safely and comfortably travel on their way through this world, must direct their course by faith, and not by sight, or the appearance things make to their sight, sense, and carnal reason.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall,

I. Consider the journey we are all on.

II. Shew how we must, while we are on our way, direct our course by faith, and not by sight, as ever we would get safely and comfortably through.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall consider The journey we are all on. Saints and sinners are both travellers. The difference between them lies not in that the one are on their journey, and the other arrived at their home; nay, they are both by the way; and sinners are walking as fast to their home, as saints to theirs. But it lies here; the one "walk by faith," the other "walk by sight." Therefore hear a few words of our common journey.

1. The point where we began our journey, was from the womb; the moment we received life there, we set off in our way. Then we commenced sinful creatures, as saith the psalmist; Psalm li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me;" and therefore dying creatures. So we were on our way, ere we could point a foot to the ground, ere we knew where we were.

2. The point where we will end it, is another world, the unseen world, the place and state of the dead. The travellers will never

halt till they be there, whether they sleep or wake; for says Job, chap. xxx. 23, "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." The baiting-places by the way may be very different; but the lodging place is one; we will lie down alike in the dust.

3. Our journeying, or travelling, or walking itself, is our motion between these two points; and that is our living here. Our life in this world is not a rest, but a travelling motion; a travelling from the womb to the grave; a coming from the womb of our mother-woman, and going in again to the womb of our mother-earth; as saith Job, chap. i. 21, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither."

4. The place our way lies through, is this present world; where the rising and setting sun makes so many days and nights; where are so many summers and winters, while the travellers are on their road; where God sends out his messengers to direct us to the right road. Carnal men count it their dwelling-place; hence saith the psalmist, Psalm xlix. 11, "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names." Again, they call it their resting place; hence said the rich man, Luke xii. 19, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But it is but our journeying place we travel through; like a town on the road, where the traveller comes in at the one end of it, and goes out at the other; Eccl. i. 4, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh."

5. The way we make in our journey is our time. How much of our time, so much of our way is over; and one step of our way, right or wrong, we will never go back. Time flies away; and we cut our way more quickly than a post; and therefore will soon be at our journey's end.

6. *Lastly*, Every breathing we make, every pulse is a step in the way. God hath determined how often every one shall breathe in and out the air, how many rounds the blood shall go in our bodies, what number of pulses it shall make. These are the steps by which this journey is made. At length the last pulse beats, the last breathing is made; and we are at our journey's end.

II. The next thing is to show, How we must, while we are on our way, direct our course by faith and not by sight, as ever we would get safely and comfortably through.

1. As we are by nature possessed of sight and sense, we must be by grace possessed of faith too. We are men endowed with sense

and reason, but we must be Christians too, having received Jesus Christ by faith; as saith the apostle, Col. ii. 6, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Mere sensual or natural men, without a gracious principle, a principle of faith, cannot walk but by sense. Faith must first fetch a new life, or new nature from Christ, in habitual sanctification, before one can walk by faith in actual holiness; 2 Cor. v. 17, "Therefore," saith the apostle, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." Eph. ii. 10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

2. We must no more make the present world our mark and chief aim, but the unseen world of eternal bliss. Sense discovers the seen world as a beautiful thing in the profits and pleasures thereof, and it terminates the view of the travellers by sight. But faith's travellers look beyond it, and discover the better country, Immanuel's land; and being firmly persuaded it is a better country, steer their course directly for it; Cant. viii. 5, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Heb. xi. 13, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Phil. iii. 14, "I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

3. We must take our way-marks to that land by faith, and not by sight. The travellers that walk by sense, they see the multitude on their way, and they see it is approved by the general vote; and so they go on in their loose and easy way of religion, where the law as a law does not gird them strait; and in their legal way of religion, where they hang by the bit of the law as a covenant. For that is a sightly, rational way, not fanciful they think.

But the travellers by faith look to the word, and by faith discover only Christ to be the personal way, and universal holiness the real way; John xiv. 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Psalm cxix. 6, "Then," says the psalmist, "shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." And therefore they work as if they were to win heaven by working: and renounce all confidence before the Lord in their works, as if they had never done a good work; hence is that character given of them, Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

4. We must go on our way, not in felt strength, but believed

strength. Sight and sense are bold, according to what the man finds within himself; as said Peter, "Though all should deny thee, yet will not I." Faith is bold in what it sees in Christ; hence is that exhortation, 2 Tim. ii. 1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And hence the Christian's experience is, 2 Cor. xii. 10, "When I am weak, then am I strong." For he says, Psalm lxxi. 16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

5. We must not wait the comforts of sight and sense, under the hardships of the way, but take the comfort of faith; Psalm cviii. 7, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." They may wait long the other way ere they get it; but faith is help at hand; for faith's cordial water is always ready, viz. the spring of the word that is always clear, even while the dispensations of providence are drumlie; hence saith David, Psalm lvi. 10, "In God will I praise his word; in the Lord will I praise his word."

6. We must not take the testimony of our sight and sense, but believe the report of faith, concerning all we meet with in our way; and walk accordingly. Worldly ease, wealth, and prosperity, are excellent good things; tribulations and trials very ill things, by the testimony of sense; but faith reports quite otherwise of them; that the former is dangerous, and the latter the more safe. Sense says, he hates, and therefore he rebukes; faith corrects the mistake by the word, and says he loves; and therefore "as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," Rev. iii. 19. We must believe,

7. *Lastly*, When sight and sense fails, we must hold faith's gripe, and press forward; hence saith the psalmist, Psalm lxxiii. 26, "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." In particular temptations, trials, &c., when the foot is ready to slip, we must hold fast the promise; for there is our safety and comfort too; Psalm xxvii. 13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." When all streams of consolation arising from this world are running dry, we must fetch in consolation from another world; hence saith the prophet, Hab. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Use 1. Sinners, be no longer deceived with vain appearances, cease your pursuit of the objects of sense as your great mark and aim, and close with Christ the object of faith, looking for your portion in the unseen world of happiness. Consider,

1. Sight and sense have deceived you, and will do so to the end, Eccles. i. 2. It is impossible for what you see in this world, if it were all yours, to satisfy your heart in its cravings. You labour in vain; Eccles. i. 8. "All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

2. Faith will bring in full satisfaction to you; hence is that exhortation; Psal. lxxxi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." It brings in a fully satisfying object; for such will be Christ in you the hope of glory; and according to the measure of your faith, so will your actual satisfaction and soul's rest be; and if it were perfect, the satisfaction would be so too.

And if ye would take this course,

1. Secure your belief of a better world, of a full and eternal happiness beyond the boundaries of time. Believe it on the testimony of God in his word. Alas! with most men it is rather may-be than a certainty; a probable opinion, than a matter of firm persuasion. If it were not so, men could not be so indifferent about it.

2. Believe that Christ is held forth to you in the gospel-promise to be trusted to, and so to be embraced by you, that you may by that trust on him as your Saviour be united to him; John iii. 16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Eph. iii. 17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," &c. And in and with him is held forth all the grace and glory of the unseen world; Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" So receiving him, ye will be heirs of the eternal inheritance discovered and embraced in the promise by faith.

Use 2. Let such as are under spiritual desertion, going mourning without the sun, from whom the spiritual sight and comfortable sense they sometimes had is gone, know that believing is a proper course for them. Though your way unto God seems to be built up round about you with hewn stone, there is often a place left whereat ye may walk out by faith; Isa. l. 10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

1. Though former spiritual sight and feeling is gone, that ye are left as a stone, the promise of the gospel is where it was still. Your mismanagement cannot make the faithfulness of God of none effect; 2 Tim. ii. 13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he can-

not deny himself." The breasts of the promise are as full and free as before.

2. Try to believe and apply the promise. Ye find ye have not the power of your spiritual limbs; but God calls you to arise and walk by faith. Shew good-will and the obedience of faith upon Christ's call, as the man with the withered hand. There may be great mercy in the womb of the heavy dispensation ye are shut up under; Rom. xi. 32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Strong appears that power, that suddenly looses the waters bound up with an intense frost.

3. Wait not for sense and feeling, that ye may believe; but believe, that ye may recover spiritual sense and feeling again; Psalm lxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Rom. xv. 13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Use 3. *Last*, Remember that, particularly at the Lord's table, ye walk by faith, not by sight. Labour by faith to discern the Lord's body exhibited unto you in the sacramental signs, and feed thereupon by a believing application of Christ to yourselves.

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2 Cor. v. 7,

*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

[The second sermon on this text.]

Ye have been at your spiritual meal, which our Lord allows for the refreshment of travellers by the way; now ye must arise, and walk on your way to Zion; and if ye would walk aright, ye must walk by faith not by sight.

The doctrine observed from the words was,

Doctrine. They that would safely and comfortably travel on their way through this world, must direct their course by faith, and not by sight, or the appearance things make to their sight, sense, and carnal reason.

All I shall further do in discoursing from this doctrine shall be,

I. To offer a short view of walking by faith, not by sight.

II. To shew wherein lies the difference betwixt faith and sight in this matter.

III. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall offer a short view of walking by faith, and not by sight. It lies in these four,

1. In taking our aim by faith, and not by sight. The aim taken by sight is low; that by faith is high, out of reach of sight; hence saith the apostle, Phil. iii. 14, "I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." While the great aim of them that walk by sight and sense, is to win the world, the ease and comforts of it, let yours be to win Christ, as was Paul's; Phil. iii. 8, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." Let it be to me with Christ, as was the same apostle's; chap. i. 23, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Follow that aim and ye walk by faith.

2. In taking your guide for your way by faith, not by sight. Give over walking according to the course of this world; but take Christ for your guide, whom the Father has given for that end; Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." Your own sight and wisdom are not to be trusted for guiding you; ye will never get through, if he be not eyes to you in the wilderness.

3. In taking your directions in the way by faith, not by sight. Sight takes up things by their outward appearance, faith views them in the glass of the word. And the word is the rule of the walk that is by faith; Isa. viii. 20, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." And to that word the traveller is to turn his eyes in all difficulties.

4. In fetching in your support and provision in the way by faith, not by sight. Faith goes to the promise for that end; hence said Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 12, "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." It is the staff in his hand to help him forward, the well of consolation to drink at for refreshment, the cordial to keep from fainting.

II. Where lies the difference betwixt faith and sight in this matter? There is a sight and sense of spiritual things, as well as of worldly things. But whatever kind sight and sense be of while we

are in the way, there is a great difference betwixt faith and it, so that we are to direct our course by the former, not by the latter.

1. Sight looks into ourselves, and out to the world; but faith looks up to Christ. Hence many heavy things present themselves to the traveller's sight, partly without, and partly within him, which are apt to cause him to faint in his way. But faith looking to Christ, discerns in him what is more than balance for all these, 1 Pet. i. 6, 8, and makes him go cheerfully on. If at any time joyful and refreshing things present themselves to his sight, yet these are but some shallow streams from that fulness in Christ which faith sits down at; Col. ii. 10, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

2. Sight proceeds upon the outward appearance of things; and because these are often false, the traveller is led out of his way thereby into pits and snares; as was the case with Samuel; 1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7, "And it came to pass when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." And this is the very way how many are led off into the mire of profanity, following the sight of their eyes; others into damnable heresies, following the dictates of their corrupt reason in divine mysteries. But faith proceeds on the testimony of God, believing because God has said it; receiving the kingdom of God as a little child, to whom the Father's saying is enough for his believing, and his bidding for his doing. So walking by faith is sure walking, because on the testimony of God that cannot lie, Tit. i. 2.

3. The object of sight is very variable, sometimes waxing, sometimes waning, and sometimes disappearing for good and all; hence they that walk by it, are like men walking by the help of the moon in a cloudy night, that often leaves them in darkness. This was the psalmist's case; Psalm xxx. 7, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Hence such unevenliness in the way of many. But the object of faith is fixed and unchangeable; Heb. xiii. 8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." 2 Pet. i. 19, We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." And hence walking by faith is steady walking; the man holds on his

way, though comforts fail without and within. Christ is to the fore, the promise is sure anchor-ground.

4. Sight reaches only to things present, but faith reaches to future things; Heb. xi. 1, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Sight and sense looking to the present dispensation of providence, tells the traveller, what is; but faith looking to the promise, tells what will be. Sight says, there is a beautiful world for a resting place: and the traveller listening to its tale, begins to seek rest there. But faith tells, there is a train in the bowels of it, that will blow it up, and it will be in flames shortly; and so he hasteth forward; and, There is a better world to come. Sight says, ofttimes, There is a hard way, and a dark night, no appearance of day; but faith says on the credit of the promise, But the end will be peace, and the morning cometh.

5. *Lastly*, Sight reaches no further even into things present, than the outside; but faith looks in to what is wrapt up within them. It discovers the lion's and leopard's dens in Lebanon, hid from sight by the pleasant growth there; the poison covered up in the world's golden dish, that deceived sense would otherwise receive. And it will discover a paradise, where nothing lies open to sight but a hedge of thorns, 2 Cor. xii. 10. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." It will make surprising discoveries in a sore affliction. Weighing an affliction that to sense is the weight of a talent, it will discover it to be really light; measuring one of long continuance to sense it will discover it to be but for a moment; trying the nature and operation of one that appears deadly and destructive to sense, it will discover it to "work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

III. The next thing is, to give the reasons of the point. Consider,

1. It was walking by sight that first ruined the world; as we find Gen. iii. 6, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." And by the same method the ruin is a-carrying on still. If it was so dangerous to walk by sight in paradise, how is it possible it can be safe now, when snares are multiplied in the world, and our faculty of discerning is so notably impaired?

2. The life present is appointed for faith, the life to come for

sight and sense. Now is the time of trial, and the trial of faith in particular, walk by it now; the trial will shortly be over, and faith will be turned into sight, and the saints shall be happy in seeing and feeling to their heart's wish for ever. Two summers are not to be expected in one year; and they that will have their summer of sense now, will have a long winter of it through eternity.

3. Faith and sight in the matter of comfort differ as duty and privilege. Faith is our duty at all times, foul or fair; hence is that exhortation, Psalm lxii. 8, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us." Spiritual sight and sense is a privilege that God gives or withholds from his people according to sovereign pleasure. The duty of believing is prescribed us for our work; sight and sense allowed now and then for our encouragement in it, as we see in the case of Thomas; John xx. 27—29, "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And therefore we are to walk by faith.

4. *Lastly*, Our happiness for time and eternity lies in unseen things; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, forecited. It is an unseen Christ from whom we have all our hope of happiness, Christ in you the hope of glory. It is an unseen world where we can be completely happy. Therefore we walk to destruction if we walk not by faith.

Use. 1*st*, As ever ye would walk safely through the world, and not be ensnared for the present, and ruined in the end, walk by faith, and not by sight. And for this end consider,

1. Ye are in an ensnaring world. Ye have a fair-faced deceitful world to deal with, a subtle devil ready to outwit you, and ye are but weak-sighted for discerning snares. If ye trust to sight and sense, and walk not by faith, ye will be ensnared and circumvented to your eternal ruin. Therefore hear our Lord's direction, Cant. iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards."

2. Sight, and sense, and corrupt reason, are making fearful shipwreck of souls at this day; and spiritual plagues are a-dealing plentifully, in delivering up the generation to them, that have refused to walk by faith. The plague began in untender and loose practices; these have ate out the life of spirituality in religion; and it has proceeded to the casting off of the principles of religion at length, re-

jecting first the grace of Christ, and then attacking the doctrine of the person of Christ, his supreme Godhead, necessary and self-existence and independency. So that our posterity are like to have transmitted to them a mere rational kind of religion, under the name of Christianity, that has no dependence on nor relation to the glorious person, grace, and Spirit of Christ, the Father's equal; which differs not from Heathenism, but in some accidentals. And the spring of all is, walking by sight, not by faith; the pleasing of sense in practice, and corrupt reason in principles. Therefore take heed, and learn the humility of faith in practice and principles, to echo your soul's consent to "Thus saith the Lord" in his word. And,

(1.) Walk by faith in duty. Your call to it being clear, go about it in the faith of the promise of throughbearing; and not of your own gifts, abilities, and home furniture for it; Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things," says the apostle, "through Christ which strengtheneth me."

(2.) Walk by faith against sin, and your several corrupt lusts that are to be mortified. Look to the cross of Christ, thence to bring destruction on them, applying the virtue of Christ's death to yourselves by faith; Rom. vi. 6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;" trusting to him for the efficacy of his Spirit in the appointed means of mortification; Rom. viii. 13, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

(3.) Walk by faith through temptations; being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, believing his grace shall be sufficient for you, for that the battle is the Lord's. The fast hold of the promise of his grace, will be your security.

2*dly*, As ever ye would walk comfortably through the world, walk by faith, not by sight. The comfort of sight and sense is very uncertain and shortlived; the mountain may be standing sure this day, that may be overturned to-morrow. And whatever comfort ye have that way now, ye will certainly come to the time, when, if ye cannot walk comfortably by faith, ye will have no comfort at all.

(1.) Walk by faith in desertion. Sometimes the candle of spiritual sense is blown out to God's people, but the sun of the promise is firm as the sun in the heavens. And they are brought to that case for the trial of faith, which must then act on the bare word of promise; Isa. l. 10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

(2.) Walk by faith in affliction, believing it is God's ordinance for humbling and purifying; that there is no needless affliction ye meet with; that he will be with you in it, and will deliver you in the time that will be best for deliverance.

(3.) *Lastly*, Walk by faith through death. So they walked through the Red Sea, and were safe, though the waters were as hanging heaps on every hand of them; confident on the ground of God's faithfulness in the word of free grace; Heb. xi. 29, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land, which the Egyptians essaying to do, were drowned."

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2 Corinthians v. 7,

*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

[The third sermon on this text.]

Having had occasion to discourse from these words at a late sacramental occasion, I observed the following point of doctrine from them, viz., They that would safely and comfortably travel on their way through this world, must direct their course by faith, and not by sight, or the appearance things make to their sight, sense, and carnal reason; which I endeavoured to open up and apply; and without repeating what was then delivered, I shall, as the subject of farther discourse from this text, gather up the substance of the words in the two following doctrines.

Doct. I. The Christian walk is not by sight, or the outward appearance of things.

Doct. II. The Christian walk is a walking by faith.

In handling the first of these doctrines, I shall,

I. Shew that there is such a walk in use in the world.

II. Open up the nature of this walking by sight, and shew wherein it lies.

III. Confirm the doctrine.

IV. *Lastly*, Make some practical improvement.

I. I shall shew that there is such a walk in use in the world.

1. There are many whose main care and concern is for the body, and the things of a present life; neglecting their souls and their eternal interest: hence saith David; Psalm iv. 6, "There be many that say, who will shew us any good?" but there are few that say,

"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." This sad truth is obvious to discerning persons, who cannot but see the world thronged with such egregious fools, who are penny wise and pound foolish. But let such consider that word; Matth. xvi. 26, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

2. The life of most men is passed in a dream, being one continued cheat imposed on them by the grand deceiver; Psalm iv. 2, "O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?" They never open their eyes, to see matters in their true colours, till all is past remedy. This was the case of the rich man; Luke xvi. 23, "Who in hell lift up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." The foolish virgins dreamed on till the door was shut. See the spring of this; Isa. xxiv. 20, "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

3. Few are at pains to examine matters by the word, which gives heaven's testimony of them, Isa. viii. 20; but they take him according to their own outward appearance. Hence the bait is swallowed greedily, without discerning the hook, till it stick in their throat.

4. Ofttimes things that are good and profitable, are neglected and shunned, because they are not pleasant to sense; and things pleasing to sense, though poisonous and destructive in their own nature, are greedily embraced. Hence is that woe; Isa. v. 20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." A plain evidence that sense is the leading principle, and not faith.

II. I will open the nature of this walking by sight, and shew wherein it lies. Walking by sight lies,

1. In taking your aim by sight, and not by faith, contrary to that; 2 Cor. iv. 18, "While we look not at the things which are seen; but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." Every man has some aim, which is the main thing he drives at; but most men take their aim by sight and sense, setting themselves to pursue that for their portion, which sight and sense recommend to them. Hence in walking by sight,

(1.) The seen world is preferred to the unseen; Psalm iv. 6, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" In the word of the gospel we hear of an unseen world, where glory dwells, where there is an eternal enjoyment of all good; but with our eyes

we see the beauty of a present world. So sight having more influence than faith, this world is chosen for a portion which we see; the other is neglected as a thing unseen, and therefore unsure.

(2.) Present things to those that are to come. Hence said Paul of Demas; 2 Tim. iv. 10, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Sense says, A bird in hand, is worth two in a bush. Sense being the leading principle, the man must have his portion presently, he cannot wait; for sense cannot be gratified with any thing but what is present, Psalm xvii. 14.

(3.) Temporal things to spiritual, 2 Cor. iv. 18; forecited. Gold is preferred to grace, the fellowship of the world to the favour of God, and all the privileges of the everlasting covenant. For the former are objects of sight and sense, the latter objects of faith; and if men walk by sight, they can never prefer spiritual things which they see not, to temporal things which they do see.

2. In directing your course by sight, and not by faith, through the world. Hence is that exhortation; Numb. xv. 39, "Seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a-whoring." We have much need to be directed aright to the way we should take, through the world, wherein there are so many cross ways, byeways, dangerous ways. Men sensible of their own weakness, strive to direct their course by faith; but most men, proud and presumptuous, direct theirs by their sight and sense. Hence,

(1.) The course of this world is followed instead of the way of God's commands. Hence said the apostle to the Ephesians; Eph. ii. 2, "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Men think themselves safe enough, if there be a multitude before them; they are shameless in sin, because they have many neighbours; nay, they would think shame not to go in a way that is generally gone into; for it is a piece of the wisdom and good humour of the flesh, to be conformed to the world. But "be ye not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," Rom. xii. 2.

(2.) The most easy way is followed instead of the most safe; Matth. vii. 13, "Enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." For sense sees only what is present, sees not the end until it be come; so the broad, green, and easy way, though the pit of destruction is at the end, is preferred to the rugged way to life, by those walking by sense.

(3.) The softest steps are taken, though they be not cleanly.

What will gratify the sense is swallowed down, though it choke the conscience. When the eyes are fixed on beholding vanity, the soul runs headlong into the snare. Hence the world is filled with covetousness, sensuality, uncleanness, &c., being drawn into ruin with the silken cords of sense.

(4.) Steps dangerous to sense are shunned, to the wounding of the conscience; Prov. xxix. 25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Hence walking by sense in time of danger for religion, makes many apostates; and in time of the greatest peace, it brings a fearful snare; so that shunning to offend men, we often run ourselves on offending and grieving the Spirit of God.

3. In taking your encouragement in the way from sense, not by faith; so venturing out on strength seen and felt, not in the strength of Christ secured in the promise. Jer. xvii. 5, "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Most men know nothing of going in any strength, but what is in themselves. And hence in walking by sense,

(1.) Ofttimes there is a bold venturing on where there is a foul come off, as in Peter's case. Men presumptuously venture on such and such duties, where they sink and cannot get through, their own stock of ability failing them; they rush on temptations fearlessly, and they lose their feet, and fall into the mire. Their bow bent is broken, and they cannot find their hands in the day of battle.

(2.) Ofttimes there is a cowardly shifting of duty which God calls for; Prov. xxvi. 13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets." The man is called to duty, but he sees he is not able for it; every call to duty bears a promise of strength; but he walks by sense, not by faith, therefore can venture on no more than what he feels and sees. And many duties are cast off this way, and much guilt fixed on the conscience.

4. In rising and falling just according to sight and sense, and the outward appearance of providence. Most men know no other spring of trouble and sorrow, of peace and comfort, but that; and according as that spring runs clear or muddy, so do they find or lose their comfort. Hence,

(1.) When the outward dispensations of providence are smiling and favourable to them, they are very easy, though perhaps matters are all wrong betwixt God and their souls, as was the case with the rich man; Luke xii. 19, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." The concerns of the world prospering, they are

well, they reign as kings, for they have no due concern about the matters of another world.

(2.) When these outward dispensations are all against them, they have no comfort; for the things of sense, the only spring of their comfort, is dried up. It was not so with Job walking by faith; Job vi. 13, "Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?" nor with Habakkuk; chap. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

III. To confirm the doctrine, consider,

1. Walking by sight and sense is not the way that Christ himself walked; and sure it is the duty of believers to walk after his example; 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Now it is said of him expressly, Isa. xi. 3, "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." We have a notable instance of it in the history of his temptations; Matth. iv. 8—10, "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." So they cannot be followers of Christ that walk by sight.

2. It is not the way wherein the saints have got to the kingdom; 2 Cor. iv. 18, "They looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Had that been the way of walking every one took, where would men have been found who would have digested seen and felt hardships, for unseen comforts and happiness? Walking by sight would have been very unfit to make martyrs.

3. It is the highway of unregenerate men, sensual, not having the Spirit, Jude ver. 19. The evil spies, and the murmuring generation that listened to them, were an awful emblem of such walkers, whose carcases shall fall in the wilderness, and they never see the promised land. Those only shall see it who, like Caleb and Joshua, have another spirit.

Use I. This informs us,

1. That those are not true Christians, who habitually walk by

sight and sense, who make their sense and feeling, and outward appearance of things, the mark they walk by. If your course of life be not influenced by your belief of things that are not seen, ye will never see the land afar off.

2. Let not Christians think strange, that things are generally ordered harsh to them in the world as to their sight and sense; for it is not by things soft and easy to these, that the Lord's children make their way home; nor yet that sight and sense in spirituals is but very seldom allowed them; for though some sips and drops of that kind may now and then be let fall with them, their meal of that kind is reserved for another world.

3. So far as a child of God walks by sight and sense, he is off his road; and he will find himself bemisted in it at length, and be fain to return.

Use 2. Walk not by sight and appearance of things.

Mot. 1. It is a wavering unsettled way of walking, James i. 8. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." The objects of sense are very uncertain; they may be with one to-day, away to-morrow: wo to them that are building their peace and comfort on them; they are like one that would sleep on the top of a mast.

2. It is a deceitful way of walking. Things that have the fairest appearance to sight, are ofttimes the most hurtful and ruining; Cant. iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." And Satan deceives men a thousand times by their sight and sense.

3. *Lastly*, It is a dangerous way of walking. All mankind felt it in Eve's trusting to her eyes, and the consequences thereof; Gen. iii. 6, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." And fearful havock is still making by the same doors of destruction.

Doctrine II. The Christian walking is a walk by faith.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall,

I. Give you a view of walking by faith, shewing wherein it lies.

II. Shew how they walk that walk by faith.

III. Confirm the doctrine.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall give you a view of walking by faith, shewing wherein it lies. [Here the author repeated what was said upon the same

subject in the beginning of the second sermon on this text, above, p. 471.]

II. I shall shew how they walk that walk by faith.

1*st*, They walk heavenly; Phil. iii. 20, "For our conversation is in heaven." They that walk by sense, have a carnal, sensual, worldly walk, like the rest of the men of this world; but they that walk by faith, walk as Christ walked, they walk heavenly; which we take up in four things,

1. Heaven and glory is the place and state they have in view to reach; 2 Cor. iv. 18; they "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." They are set off in their journey, and there they design to be. There only they expect their rest, and there they desire to be; as was the case with the Old Testament saints; Heb. xi. 16, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." Those who are led by sense, like the Reubenites, &c., desire their portion on this side Jordan, and on that condition would quit their part of Canaan; but the saints are for the heavenly Canaan.

2. They look on this world only as the place of their pilgrimage, and themselves as strangers in it, who are not at home; as did the Old Testament saints, who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" Heb. xi. 13. Others carry themselves as the natives of it, they are sojourners in it, and travellers, who must take it in their way home to their Father's house. And they entertain a holy comparative contempt of it; as did the apostle; Gal. vi. 14, "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

3. They are moving heavenward; Cant. viii. 5, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" They are not only moving thither, by the course of nature hastening to another world; but in heart and affection. Their treasure is there, and therefore their heart is there. They are pressing towards it; as did Paul, Phil. iii. 14, "I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:" so running as they may obtain it at length. And at the root of all their struggles and endeavours against sin, is a desire to be with Christ.

4. They walk like men of another world; Phil. iii. 20, "For our conversation is in heaven." So the church in the exercise of grace is described, Cant. iii. 6, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankin-

cense, with all powders of the merchant?" Our Lord Jesus after his resurrection from the dead, though he continued in the world, yet did not familiarly converse in it as before; so they who by faith have received a new life, alter their course, conforming not to the world, but to the heavenly country.

Now faith makes them walk thus, as,

1. It views Christ in his transcendent glory and excellency, in the glass of the word of the gospel; 1 Pet. ii. 7, "Unto you which believe he is precious." 2 Cor. iii. 18, "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Christ seen in his glory, is an attracting object, and will make the soul follow, though it should swim through a sea of blood. So the martyrs made their way to him. See Heb. xi. 27, "By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

2. As it takes up this world, and the heavenly country, in their true colours, as described in the word. In the Bible we have illuminated maps of both worlds; but they cannot be rightly discerned by sense, but by faith. And the eye of faith discerns,

(1.) The reality of the heavenly country; that cannot be perceived by sense, and therefore is treated by sensual men as a creature of imagination, and at best uncertain. Faith fixes on the testimony of God anent it, and therefore is persuaded of the reality thereof; believing it, though they cannot see it; Heb. xi. 1, 13, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them."

(2.) The preferableness of the heavenly country to this world; Psalm iv. 6, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Heb. xi. 13, forecited. Faith sees a weight of glory there, that downweighs the smiles and frowns of the world here as light things. It sees a suitableness in these to the satisfaction of the soul, and an unsuitableness in the things of the world. It sees the one to be eternal, the other but temporary. Hence the one is followed eagerly, the other not so.

2*dly*, They walk safely; Prov. i. 33, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." This world is Satan's walk, a wilderness where like a beast he ranges to and fro for his prey; and they that walk by sense, fall a prey to him, some caught in one trap, some in another. Only walking by faith we can be safe. For,

1. Faith keeps the eye on Christ as the great leader; Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." And following him we will be safe; for he is the leader appointed by the Father; hence he said of himself, John viii. 12, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The believer closeth his own eye of sense, and takes Christ to be eyes to him in the wilderness by his word and Spirit. And hence distrusting himself, and trusting Christ for conduct, he is led on safely, where others stick and are mired.

2. Faith keeps the eye on the word of command from heaven, Psalm xvii. 4, discerning the authority of God stamped upon it, which makes the soul obey without disputing, Psalm cxix. 4, "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." Faith's view of the authority of God stamped upon a duty, will counterbalance all the reasonings of sense against it, taken from the hardship of it, danger about it, &c. And thus saith the Lord, will be sufficient to the soul in the case, though the whole world should say the contrary. And that is sure walking; Prov. x. 9, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways, shall be known."

3. Faith trusts to the divine protection in the way of duty; Psalm xci. 2, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust." Presumption is for trusting to the divine protection, in a way that God calls not the sinner to. See Matth. iv. 6, 7. In such a case there is not a promise, and so there is no foundation for that trust. But faith has a promise of protection for the soul in the way of duty, however dangerous; Isa. xliii. 2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And this promise being believed, will be made good, Rom. ix. 33, "Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed." Psalm. ii. 12, "Blessed are they that put their trust in him."

4. *Lastly*, Faith brings always safe to the journey's end, whatever storms blow, or dangers are encountered by the way; Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Heb. x. 39, "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul." Walking by sense will land people in destruction, but walking by faith will bring to the heavenly country at length." This lesson is taught

for all ages, in the carcases of the unbelieving Israelites, falling in the wilderness; and in Caleb and Joshua who believed the promise, their inheriting Canaan.

3*dly*, They walk comfortably, as well as safely; hence we read, Acts ix. 31, of "the churches walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Worldly men may walk comfortably, but not safely; but there is a worm at the root of their comfort, as in Babylon's case; Rev. xviii. 7, "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." Saints may walk mournfully and yet comfortably; 2 Cor. v. 4, 6, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." It is certain they have much grief and sorrow that others want; yet they want not comfort, if they live by faith; hence said our Lord to his drooping disciples, John xiv. 18, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." As the running brook may make more noise than the deep river, so the comfort of the ungodly may be more noisy than that of the saints; and yet the former is but like the crackling of thorns under a pot, no ways comparable to the solid comfort of faith.

1. Faith brings in fresh springs of comfort, when the world's cisterns are all run dry; Psalm cxix. 49, 50, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." The Bible will comfort, when worldly comfort fails. There faith looking to the promise, "I will be their God," will comfort under the greatest pressures of affliction; hence said the prophet, Hab. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Sense can only run from one creature to another for comfort; but faith runs from the creatures to God.

2. Faith will discover love in the heart of an angry God, smiting, and forsaking, and pursuing a quarrel against one; Psalm xxii. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" Psalm xlii. 7, 8, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will

command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." When God hides his face, and shoots his arrows against the believer; faith will let him see some glimmerings of love in his face; hence said Job, chap. xiii. 15, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

3. Faith assures the believer of the truth of God, when his dispensations of providence seem to run cross to his promises; this we have exemplified in Abraham's case; Rom. iv. 18—20, "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Heb. xi. 17—19, "By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead: from whence also he received him in a figure."

4. Faith eases the soul of many burdens that make uncomfortable walking. It eases it of a burden of guilt; Rom. v. 1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." It eases it of strong corruption, "Acts v. 9, "Purifying their hearts by faith." It eases it of a burden of care and anxiety, 1 Pet. v. 7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." And it eases it of the burdensomeness of duty, Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

5. *Lastly*, Faith gives a fair prospect of safe landing in Immanuel's land, amidst all the storms that happen in the voyage; Psalm xxiii. 4, 6, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

III. To confirm this doctrine, consider,

1. The Christian's life is by faith; Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And his walk must also be by faith, Col. ii. 6, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

2. Thus the Christian's life is distinguished from that of the saints

in heaven, and that of the wicked, as he is in a middle state betwixt the two.

3. Thus Christ himself, and all the saints have walked; and thus also must all walk that intend to get to the heavenly Canaan.

Use 1. Then they who do not direct men to a life of faith, and walking by faith, teach not true Christianity. Of which unhappy number are many of the teachers of this day, whose continual theme is morality and virtue, and pressing men to the observation of these as the conditions of their salvation, and the road to happiness; without any notice of Christ, and faith in him, as the spring of all holy walking.

Use 2. Know ye, ye walk not as Christians indeed, if ye walk not by faith. If ye walk by sight, sense, appearance of things, and your own carnal reason, ye have but the name of Christians. Walk looking to unseen things; fixing your eyes on God and Christ, and the things of the other world. And thus evidence yourselves to be Christians indeed, by having your conversation in heaven, and your eyes turned away from all the objects of sense.

THE

# CHRISTIAN LIFE DELINEATED,

## IN SEVERAL PRACTICAL DISCOURSES.

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### CHRIST TO BE FOUND IN THE ORDINANCES, WITH THE IMPORT AND HAPPY EFFECTS OF FINDING HIM.*

PROVERBS viii. 35,

*For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.*

THIS chapter represents to us Wisdom speaking openly and most earnestly to her hearers. The discourse begins, ver. 4, and goes on to the end of the chapter.

It may here be enquired, 1. Who or what is this wisdom that speaks? I answer, Jesus Christ, the personal Wisdom of God; Luke xi. 49; 1 Cor. i. 24, in both which passages Christ is expressly called "the Wisdom of God." This appears from the personal properties ascribed to this Wisdom, as, (1.) Subsistence, ver. 30, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight." Compare John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (2.) The manner of subsistence, namely, eternal generation: vers. 22—24, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there was no depths, I was brought forth; when there was no fountains abounding with water." (3.) Personal attributes and effects; vers. 14—17, &c., "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength," &c.

It may be inquired, 2. To whom he speaks? I answer, "To men," ver. 4, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men;" sinful and ruined men, who stand in need of salvation.

3. It may be inquired, What he speaks? I answer, The sum of it all is to commend itself to their souls, from their eternal happi-

* The substance of several sermons preached at Ettrick, in the year 1721.

ness, ver. 11, and downwards, "for wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it," &c.

4. What is the application of this discourse? It is an exhortation to hear his voice, comply with it, and close with him, ver. 32, and downwards, "Now therefore hearken unto me," &c.

In the two last verses is the conclusion of the whole matter.

(1.) Happiness is wrapt up in the enjoyment of him; ver. 35, "For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

(2.) Ruin is inevitable in the rejecting of him; ver. 36, "But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death."

The former is the subject of our text; in which consider,

1. The connection with the preceding words, "For;" shewing them to be the reason of the blessedness pronounced on those that "hear him, watching daily at his gates," &c. These gates are the ordinances. It is supposed that he comes out at these gates, and so men being found watching at them, find him when he is pleased to come forth. It is a metaphor, which may be taken either, (1.) From scholars, whose hearts being set on learning, wait on at the school-door, till they can get in; or, (2.) From courtiers: Esth. ii. 21, or others waiting for access to their prince. (3.) Or from clients waiting on their advocates, or their judges late and early. Or, (4.) From lovers, who will hang on, watching for a meeting; Job xxxi. 9. They that thus watch and wait at Christ's gates, till he come forth, for getting their errand, are made up for ever. Which is the import of,

2. The words themselves; describing the happiness of those that find Christ. Wherein there are two things:—

1*st*, The happy man in heaven's account, "Whoso findeth me." It imports, that it is not every one that comes to his gates that finds him; many go as they came; but some do find him. The world counts him the happy man that finds riches, honours, pleasures, &c., like Ephraim, who said, "I am become rich, I have found me out substance;" Hos. xii. 8; and therefore they watch and wait greedily where they may have them, saying, "Who will shew us any good?" Psalm iv. 6. But when they have found what they were seeking, it often appears, that they have been seeking and have found their own ruin. But he is happy indeed that finds Christ, for he finds an upmaking treasure.

2*dly*, The happiness of that man; which lies in two things,

(1.) He that finds Christ "finds life." Without him we are dead

men; but falling on Christ the fountain of life, as the man's dead body on the bones of Elisha; 2 Kings xiii. 21, the soul gets life, eternal life, that will never die out any more. [*Heb.* hath found;] in finding me, he hath found life; 1 John v. 12, "He that hath the Son, hath life."

(2.) He "shall obtain favour of the Lord;" for the Father is well pleased with Christ, and with all who are in him. He shall be accepted with the Lord; Eph. i. 6. The sky shall clear on him, which was lowring before. Heaven shall smile on him. Yea, he shall bring forth favour from the Lord, as out of a treasure now opened to him; so the word intimates.

From the connection of the text with the preceding context, we may observe the two following doctrines, viz:—

Doctrine I. The ordinances are the place where Christ is to be found of poor sinners.

Doct. II. People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ.

I shall discuss these two doctrines before I enter on the words themselves.

Doct. I. The ordinances are the place where Christ is to be found of poor sinners.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what are the ordinances in which Christ is to be found.

II. Confirm the doctrine.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I am to shew what are the ordinances wherein, especially, Christ is to be found. If any of you have Job's desire; Job xxiii. 3, "O that I knew where I might find him!" I would direct you to "go out by the footsteps of the flock;" Cant. i. 8, where to find him. These ordinances are,

1. The divine ordinance of meditation; Hag. i. 5, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways." Here is the first sight oft-times that a sinner gets of Christ; as did the prodigal son; Luke xv. 17, "When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Therefore David adviseth his enemies to this; Psalm iv. 4, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed." And here the saints have often got renewed sights of him, to their soul's satisfaction; Psalm lxiii. 5, 6, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." What is it that keeps Christ and many sinners

asunder, but that really they will not come near this gate of wisdom? They will not think on their case.

2. Christian conference about spiritual matters. Hence we read of this being practised in a very declining time; Mal. iii. 16, "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another. This was the gate at which the two disciples found and met with Christ; Luke xxiv. 32, "Did not our hearts burn within us," say they, "while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" As two cold flint stones struck one upon another produce fire; so doth spiritual conference sometimes warm cold hearts; Cant. v. 8, 9, and vi. 1. Meetings for Christian fellowship have been meeting-places with Christ to many; the due consideration whereof might well encourage and stir up Christians to a more frequent attendance upon them.

3. Singing of the Lord's praises. This is a commanded duty; Eph. v. 18, 19—"Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." What made David so frequently to wait on about this gate, but that he knew the King used to come forth that way? Here Paul and Silas got a joyful meeting with Christ even in a prison; Acts xvi. 25, 26. It is pity, that people should treat it as a blind gate, at which they never look for the Lord to come forth. But in the experience of the Lord's people he is to be found there. The heavenly melody sometimes melts hard hearts, elevates drooping souls, and fills them with glowing affection to Christ.

4. Prayer. It is called seeking of God, and is the highway to find him. It has a large promise; Matth. vii. 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" and it has been the gate of heaven to many a soul. It is a four-leaved gate, and at every one of the leaves the King has shewn himself to poor sinners. (1.) Public prayer, at which Lydia got her heart opened; Acts xvi. 13, 14. (2.) Private prayer, whether in one's family; Acts x. 30, or otherwise in society with others privately; Acts xii. 12. This social prayer has a large promise made to it; Matth. xviii. 19, "I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (3.) Secret prayer. Many a soul has found Christ there. There Jacob got the blessing; Gen. xxxii. 24. There Daniel beheld the King in his glory, and obtained favour; Dan. ix. 22. This has many a time made the corner of a barn, byre, or dyke-side, a Bethel, a Peniel; and these are more esteemed than a king's palace, by the children of God. (4.)

Ejaculatory prayer. This has many times suddenly opened, to the soul's finding of Christ. So it did with Moses; Exod. xiv. 15, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;" and with Nehemiah, chap. ii. 4. No wonder they do not find him, that watch not at this gate.

5. The word. This is the most patent door of heaven, at which the King usually comes forth to his attendants, that come to wait on him there. It is a two-leaved gate. (1.) The word read, Rev. i. 3, "Blessed is he that readeth." Augustine hearing a voice, Take up and read, opened Rom. xiii. 12, 13, and was converted. Junius was brought to Christ by reading John i. (2.) The word preached, 1 Cor. i. 21,—"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. This is a well of salvation at which three thousand persons at a time drank and lived, Acts ii. 41. The eunuch met with Christ at this gate, where the one, viz. hearing the word, opened after the other, viz. reading the word; and he found favour with the Lord.

6. *Lastly*, The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. These are sealing ordinances, in which many have had sensible communion with Jesus Christ. It is true, the first finding of him is not to be expected here; but though they are not converting, they are confirming ordinances; and as such, happy means of strengthening the believer's faith and love, and increasing his acquaintance with Christ.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, consider,

1. The ordinances are by Christ's own appointment the trysting-places, wherein he has promised to be found of those that seek him; Exod. xx. 24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." So that coming thither to wait on him, they may expect to find him there. It is the divine appointment put upon them, which is accompanied with a blessing, that gives ground of hope in the case. By this they are,

(1.) Trysting places for sinners; where they may be convinced, converted, and regenerated; James i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." These are the pools where the Spirit troubles the water for the cure of sinners of their deadly soul diseases. And there Christ and the sinner meet, for making up the spiritual match. (2.) Trysting places for saints; where they may receive life more abundantly, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. In them he keeps his lower table for the feeding of those to whom he has given life. They are the inns in the way to Immanuel's land; the pools in the way to Zion, the wells of salvation.

2. They are the places wherein his people seek him, who know best where he is to be found. When the sponse had lost sight of her

beloved, she goes to the ordinances to seek him; Cant. iii. 2, "I will rise now," says she, "and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth." And they are the places where his people have found him, and do find him; Cant. vii. 5, "The king is held in the galleries." So it is even as natural to them to go to these duties and ordinances when they would see him, as for a child to seek out the mother, in the place where she is wont to be. And when they find him not in one duty, they go to another, till going the little further they find him.

3. They are what the Lord has allowed his people to supply the want of heaven, until they come there; the tabernacle set up in the wilderness, till they get the temple in Canaan. And therefore they must last till then and no longer; Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13, "And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." When John saw the new Jerusalem, he made that observe on it; Rev. xxi. 22, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it." But they could not supply that place, unless Christ were there; but he is there; Matth. xxviii. ult., "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Cant. iv. 6, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

III. *Lastly*, I come now to apply this doctrine.

Use I. Of reproof. It reproves,

1. Those who slight attendance on ordinances, public, private, or secret. It is much to be lamented that there are so many who do so, and that so little prevails with many to do it. Ah! sirs, if ye look on this practice in its true colours, it is a slighting of Christ, and an opportunity of meeting with him. It is a breaking of the appointment which the Son of God has made with you; and if the appointment be broken must not the business you have with him stick?

2. Those who will come to ordinances to meet with some that they have worldly business with. They will come to the church on the Lord's day, because they have somebody to meet there, perhaps a servant to bespeak, &c. This is a grossly profane abuse of the ordinances of the Lord; a turning of that which Christ appointed for the service of your souls, to the service of your lusts; a turning of that which is appointed for your eternal interest into your carnal interests. What will these say, when Christ rises up to plead with them at the

great day? when they shall hear, that his being to be found there, could not bring them there; but they would go for fellow-worms, to transact business with them?

3. Those who come to ordinances, but seek not to find Christ there; of such the Lord speaks; Isa. xxix. 13, "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do they honour me, but have removed their heart far from me." How many go to prayers, sermons, &c., who have it not in their view to meet with Christ in them? So they come away without him, and they do not mourn because they find him not; and how can they be so affected, since it was not their errand to meet with him?

4. Those who stand in the way of others attending on ordinances. The effect of this is to keep them out of Christ's way, and to hinder their keeping appointment with the Son of God; by which they become answerable for all the damage that thereupon ensues to the souls of such; Luke xi. 52, "Wo unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered..

Use II. Seek Christ in ordinances, and come to them with a design to find Christ there. When ye go to read the word, to secret duties, or family duties, or public ordinances, think with yourselves, "I am going to wisdom's gates, O shall I not see the King's face? find the smell of his garments, get some communion with Christ?" When Mary missed him in his grave, she could not be satisfied with a vision of angels, but wept on, till she found him, John xx. 11—16. O that there were such a heart in us! For motives to enforce this exhortation, consider,

1. He is well worth the seeking. "He that findeth Christ, findeth life." If his transcendent beauty and peerless excellencies were known, we could not but seek him till we had found him; John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God," says Christ to the woman of Samaria, "and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have askedof him, and he would have given thee living water." They thatfind him are made up for time andeternity. When ye come to ordinances, know ye where ye are? Ye are upon a beautiful field, and it may be your own. Ye see the surface of it, but know ye what is in the bowels of it? A treasure, and Christ is that treasure, Matth. xiii. 44. The ordinances are the earthen vessels, but there is a treasure in them, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

2. That is what the people of God have been seeking, and are intent upon in ordinances, in all ages, however careless the blind world has been about it. And they sought always again, because they had once found; they still desired to drink of that fountain,

after they had once tasted of it. Hence says David; Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. Psalm lxiii. 2, "My flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. When Jacob found himself engaged with Christ, how intent was he? Gen. xxxii. 24, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This has made them follow ordinances to the fields and the mountains, at the hazard of their lives by persecutors; and they thought all hardships little enough, to find Christ in them.

3. What avail ordinances, if ye do not find Christ in them? Upon this consideration, we should take Moses' protestation before we go to them; Exod. xxxiii. 15, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." They are but empty husks without him, and cannot feed the soul; he is the marrow and sap of them; John vi. 63, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Mary met with a disappointment, when she saw two angels in the sepulchre, but Christ himself was away. Should the man that has a petition for life, be brought before the chair of state, but his prince not in; would he not say, "Alas! it is the king alone himself that can do my business;" so here, when the soul seeks Christ, ordinances alone will not satisfy it; no, the man wants to enjoy Christ in them, as he alone is suited to his case.

4. *Lastly*, It is a great pity ye should not meet, when the parties have come so far on the appointment. And,

(1.) Most of you come hither from a considerable distance; it is pity you should forget your errand when ye are come. Ye come too far for nothing; the pains and toil of waiting on ordinances, I think, should even stir you up to think with yourselves, "What am I at this pains for? what am I seeking? shall I make nothing for my soul by it?"

(2.) But Christ came farther for it than any of you to keep this appointment, and it cost him infinitely dearer than it does any of you. It cost him a long journey from heaven to earth; to sweat drops of blood, and to lose his precious life on a cross, ere there could be a possibility of your meeting with him in ordinances. And now when he is come, shall the meeting misgive betwixt him and your souls? But I must proceed to consider,

Doct. II. People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ. One may be found at Christ's palace gates, and yet never see the King come forth; as Absalom did in another case.

Here I shall give the reasons why it is so, and then apply the point.

I. I am to offer some reasons why sinners may come to ordinances, and not find Christ. And these are all on the sinner's side.

1. Some have no design of finding Christ in ordinances at all; they have no such thing as a meeting with Christ before their eyes. But the Sabbath-day is an idle day, and they will go to the church, and see and be seen, Isa. i. 12. May be they like to hear the preaching, as they would like a lovely song to divert them. But for a Christ in the preaching, a Saviour for their lost souls, manifested therein; that is what never comes in their head. They are like Ezekiel's hearers, of whom the Lord says, chap. xxxiii. 31, 32, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play very well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

2. Many are indifferent whether they find Christ in ordinances or not. And by their indifferency they even court a denial from the King. They are not at pains to tryst with him, in earnest, before they come to public ordinances. They do not prepare for the meeting, by casting down the idols of jealousy, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Their spirits are very flat, and their desires languid when at ordinances; they are not fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. They stand at the palace-gate, but they do not ask, seek, and knock, Matth. vii. 7, and go their way contented, though they do not find him.

3. Some desire not to see him at all; Job xxi. 14, "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; they are well content he shew not himself to them. If his harbingers which go before him, namely, convictions of guilt and danger, once begin to appear, they quickly shut their eyes, and will be very desirous to get out of their way. They have no heart for the match with the Lord of glory, and so care not for coming to a treaty about it.

4. *Lastly*, Some who may have desires of meeting with Christ, yet cannot away with on-waiting at the gates, and going about from one gate to another, till they find him. We are naturally addicted to unbelieving haste, John vii. 6. If the Lord do not keep our time which we set, we conclude he will never come, Psalm cxvi. 11. But faith is a waiting grace, and sets no time, but persists in that exercise, Isa. xxviii. 16, Lam. iii. 49, 50. Now the King, to try of what metal people's desires after him are, delays long his coming forth; and by the time that he comes, as it were, the throng is away from about the palace-gate, and there remains only here and there

one whom the grace of God has endued with a principle of on-waiting. And O how heavy is it to think, that some who have gone far to find Christ, have lost him for not going a little farther! Some have waited long, and have lost him for not waiting but a little longer. The Israelites waited for Moses till the thirty-ninth day; had they but waited the fortieth day, they would not have made and worshipped the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 5. Saul waited for Samuel till the seventh day; had he waited a few hours longer, he had not offered sacrifices unwarrantably, and been stript of his kingdom, 1 Sam. xiii. 8, &c.

I shall now make some short improvement of this point.

Seek Christ so in ordinances, as ye may find him. That is,

1. Seek him sincerely and uprightly with all your heart, Deut. iv. 29. They are blessed that so seek him, Psalm cxix. 2. Seeking from the teeth outward, may prevail with those who know not men's hearts; but not with him, who knows the language of the heart, without an interpreter. It is true, in a way of sovereignty, he may be found of those that seek him not, Isa. lxv. 1, and love may make a net for a false heart; but who can promise on that?

2. Seek him honestly and generously for himself, Psalm cv. 4. Ye hear of his glorious matchless excellencies, let your hearts be caught in the net of his love. And let not his benefits be your only or main inducement, like those mentioned, John vi. 26, of whom our Lord says, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled;" for that casts contempt on his person. Sovereignty sometimes comes over this indeed, as in the case of Zaccheus.

3. Seek him fervently, Rom. xii. 11. How fervent was the Psalmist's heart, Psalm xlii. 1, "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Psalm lxiii. 1, 2, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Drowsy desires and lazy wishes will not find him out, Cant. iii. 1, 2. Be warm and importunate in your addresses, and the King will come forth at length, Luke xviii. 7.

4. Seek him humbly, Psalm x. 17. The woman of Canaan is a noble instance of a humble seeker, Matth. xv. 23, &c. Beggars must not be choosers. Humility teaches to be thankful for a crumb, for a passing view of the King.

5. Seek him diligently, Heb. xi. 6. Careless seekers can hardly look to be finders. Seek diligently, as the spouse on considering her case did, leaving no corner of the city untouched, that she might

find him, Cant. iii. 2; as those who are searching for hidden treasure Prov. ii. 4, 5.

6. Seek him mournfully, Luke ii. 48. Mary did so, and found him, John xx. 11, &c., and Jacob also, Hos. xii. 4. When he withdraws, were one mourning for the want, it would be a hopeful sign. Lament after the Lord; there is good reason for it at this day.

7. *Lastly*, Seek him constantly, till ye find him, therein intimating the example of the church; Lam. iii. 49, 50, "Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not, without any intermission: till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." Be resolute not to give over till ye have met with him, and be sure ye will not be disappointed in the end.

I come now to the words themselves. The happy man is he that findeth Christ. Finding of Christ is the upmaking of the soul, it is man's happiness; no wonder it be a big thing, comprehending much. I take it up in these two. (1.) A saving discovery of Christ made to the soul; so the word is used, Matth. xiii. 46, in the case of finding the pearl. (2.) An interest in him, yea, actual possession of him, as one's own obtained. So in our text, findeth life, *i. e.* really gets life. So they find him, who get such a discovery of him, as terminates in their closing with him, whereby he is theirs, and they are his.

The following doctrines offer themselves from the words now and formerly explained.

Doct. I. Then do people find Christ, when, upon a saving discovery of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith.

Doct. II. Sinners finding Christ, find life.

I shall handle each doctrine in order.

Doct. I. Then do people find Christ, when, upon a saving disco very of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith. This I shall explain and apply.

In explaining the doctrine, I shall,

I. Offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ.

II. More particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ.

I. I am to offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ. And,

1. There is a twofold finding of him; initial, and progressive.

1*st*, There is an initial finding of Christ, which is the soul's first finding of him, the first meeting betwixt Christ and the soul, Matth. xiii. 45, 46, when the dead soul meets with the life-giving Saviour. Upon this our salvation depends.

2*dly*, There is a progressive finding of him, which is a child of

God's finding of him in the progress of his state of grace, Matth. vii. 7. Thus the spouse found him, Cant. iii. 4, after some partial withdrawing from her.

The difference betwixt these two lies in this, that the immediate effect of the former is union, of the other, actual communion with Christ. The one is the marriage with Christ, the other the return of the husband to his deserted spouse. The text, I think, comprehends both; but the first mainly; compare ver. ult. And both consist of a discovery of Christ, and a receiving him; the latter as well as the former; the one initial, the other progressive. It is the first of these I intend.

2. There are some things to be observed touching this finding of Christ.

1*st*, Sinners in their natural state have lost God, Eph. ii. 12. God is not their God, they have no saving interest in him. There was a covenant of friendship betwixt God and innocent man; but, alas! that covenant was broken, and man quite lost his friend, his God. So he goes up and down the world, in his natural state, a poor friendless creature.

2*dly*, Man is a seeking creature; for he cannot miss to know that he wants, nor to desire to have his wants supplied; Matth. xiii. 45. He goes through the creation, seeking something to satisfy his heart. And when one will not do, he goes to another. The soul of man, though in its blindness it knows not what it would be at, is still seeking; like a nest of young birds still gaping for meat from the dam.

3*dly*, There is no rest for, nor satisfying of the soul till it come to God. This is not from any desire the soul has of God while in its natural state, but ariseth from the natural state of it, whereby it comes to pass, that nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy it. Therefore the natural man is represented as one ever labouring, but never able to get rest; Matth. xi. 28, Isa. lv. 1, 2. And its life is a wandering and seeking without intermission; Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

4*thly*, God is in Christ, to be found in him, and in him only; 2 Cor. v. 19, Col. ii. 9. As the Israelites, who wandered forty years in the wilderness, had a tabernacle set up among them, where they might find God, which was called (Heb.) the tabernacle of meeting; so Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle of meeeting betwixt God and sinners; and he is no where else to be found. So that till the soul fall on Christ in its weary search, it can never come to God, nor to true rest.

II. I shall more particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ. There are two things in it.

*First*, The soul savingly discovers and discerns Jesus Christ, by a new light let into it; John xvii. 3. There is a twofold discovery of Christ. (1.) An objective discovery of him in the gospel, given to all who hear it. Thus the sun's light discovers all things in the presence of the blind man, but alas! he cannot perceive them for all that. (2) A subjective discovery, when the eyes of the understanding are opened to see what is so discovered; Acts xxvi. 18, Isa. xxxiii. 17. This is the finding of Christ, in respect of which the sinner is like Hagar near the well; Gen. xxi. 19. Jesus Christ is near the man; Rom. x. 8, but he sees him not, so still he wants him, till, the Lord opening his eyes, he discerns Christ, and so finds him. The soul then beholds him in a twofold glory.

1. The glory of his person, as God-man: an admirable person, a nonsuch, the chief among ten thousand, Cant. v. 10. The soul finding Christ, beholds him as the Father's fellow, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; Heb i. 3, in respect of his divine nature; and as our kinsman, and the glory of mankind, in respect of his human nature; the flower of Adam's posterity, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

2. The glory of his mediatory office, 1 Tim. ii. 5. The soul gets a sight of him, as the great Daysman betwixt God and sinners, fit to lay his hand on both parties. It beholds him as the tabernacle of meeeing, where God meets with the sinner to make up the peace; as that noble Personage appointed of the Father the repairer of the breach made by sin; the great Surety and Cautioner for sinners' debt and God's glory. And there are six things the soul now sees in Christ.

(1) A transcendent excellency, beauty, and loveliness in him; Isa. xxxiii. 17, Cant. v. *ult.* It sees him lovely in his natures, in his offices, in his holy life, and in his bloody death; lovely in himself, and in his purchase. It is a too common question that the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse; Cant. v. 9. What is thy beloved more than another beloved? The world sees no beauty in him, for which he is to be desired; they see more beauty in carnal worldly objects, than in the Plant of Renown. But no sooner does the soul find him, but it sees him lovely above all persons and things. His discovered excellency darkens all created glory, as the sun arising darkens the candle-light, and makes the stars hide their heads; Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

(2.) A fulness in him for the supply of all its wants; Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. There is, (1.) A fulness of the Godhead in him, Col. ii. 9. The soul that has lost God, finding him, finds God in him, John xiv. 11. (2.) A

fulness of merit, for our justification, and a title to heaven. (3.) A fulness of Spirit, for our sanctification, and making us meet for heaven. Finding Christ, the soul finds a treasure, for preciousness, abundance, and variety.

(3.) A suitableness in him; and that is twofold.

[1.] A suitableness in Christ to their own case, as when a hungry man finds meat, or a naked man clothes, Rev. iii. 18. The soul of man goes through the creation, seeking a match in whom it may rest; but it never finds a suitable one till it find Christ. Still the bed is shorter than that it can stretch itself upon it, and the cover narrower than that it can wrap itself in it; but coming to Christ, the soul finds him completely suited to its case; suited to still and quiet the conscience by his atoning blood, and to satisfy its craving desires by his all-fulness. There appears, then, a suitableness in everything in and about him; in his natures, in his offices, in his life and death, resurrection, ascension, &c.

[2.] A suitableness in him to the glory of God. The sinner whose eyes are opened can never expect salvation but in a way suitable to God's perfections, his holiness and justice; and the mystery of Christ appears thus suited, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Here at once appears how justice is satisfied, and the sinner saved; and God has his glory and the sinner his salvation together.

(4.) The wisdom of God in him, 1 Cor. i. 24. The wisdom of God eminently appeared in the creation, and appears every day in the works of providence; but the master-piece of divine wisdom is the mystery of Christ, wherein is the greatest display of the divine perfections, his power, justice, holiness, mercy, love, goodness, and truth, all woven together by infinite wisdom. And there is none that finds Christ, but must say that that device is one becoming infinite wisdom.

(5.) An ability to save, Heb. vii. 25. When sin appears in its native colours to the awakened conscience, the soul is apt to question, if there be any balm in Gilead for such wounds; if there be any hope of such a case. But when Christ is discovered to the soul, he appears as the Lord of hosts, mighty to save; there is merit enough in his blood to wash away the deepest guilt, and efficacy enough in his Spirit to subdue the strongest corruptions.

(6.) *Lastly*, Willingness to save, and to communicate of his fulness to the needy soul, Heb. iv. 15, 16. The discovery of this was what brought the prodigal son home, Luke xv. 17, and the utter want of it must make the starving soul die in despondency. This is that which of all things awakened sinners have most ado to discern in Christ, if he be willing to save them, to bestow his precious blood

to wash such vile wretches as they. But it is discovered in lesser or greater measure to all that find Christ.

*Secondly,* Upon this discovery of Christ made unto and by the soul, the soul closes with Christ by faith. There is such a connection betwixt these two, that (1.) None can close with Christ without it, Cant. v. 9. People may love an unseen Christ, but not an unknown Christ. (2.) All that get it close with him, Psalm ix. 10, John iv. 10. For,

1. Such a discovery of Christ is not made to the soul till it be hunger-bitten, lost in its own eyes, and would be content with a Saviour on any terms, Acts ix. 6, Prov. xxiv. 7. A starving person needs no other invitation to eat but to see meat; and when Christ is discovered to the soul lost in its own eyes, it will embrace him.

2. The nature of the object speaks for itself, John iv. 10. Christ discovered to the soul is precious, 1 Pet. ii. 7, and he who once finds the pearl, will gripe at it to make it his own. He is suitable to its case, which likewise insures the soul's closing with him, as the sick man with the physician, or the captive with the deliverer.

3. It is always attended with a heart-conquering power, Psalm cx. 3. When the Lord opens the eyes in saving illumination, he looses the heart by renewing the will, and so brings the soul to embrace Christ.

I shall now apply this branch of the subject.

USE I. Of information. This shews us,

1. They have never found Christ, nor seen his glory, who have not closed with him, Psalm ix. 10. They who have not matched with Christ, have never yet seen nor known the glorious Bridegroom, John i. 10, 11. For all they have heard of him in the word, or seen of him in the sacraments, they are still unacquainted with him, and he has ever been a vailed beauty to them. A look of him with an illuminated eye of the mind, would have conquered their souls to his love, Isa. xlv. 22.

2. They who reject Christ and his way, and think they have reason for so doing, must know that their judgment is not to be regarded; for they are blind men judging of colours. (1.) There are some who never made so much as a shew of trial of Christ and his way. They were estranged from God from the womb, and they held even forward in their course of sin to this day, without changing; and they are making lies of Christ to themselves and others, Psalm lviii. 3. Poor souls, they know no better, they are under soul-ruining delusion. If their eyes were opened, they would hate what they now love, and love what they now hate, Tit. iii. 3. (2.) There are others, who, after a seeming trial made of Christ and his

way, have cast them behind their back, 2 Pet. ii. 22. But neither have they ever got a discovery of him, for as long as they have hung on about Wisdom's gates, 1 Cor. ii. 8. They have got into the outer court, of prayer, the communion-table, a fair blooming profession; but they never got into the inner court, to see the King in his beauty. Let both know, that there is something in religion which they never knew to this day; and while they despise it, they despise what they know not. And if they knew what they know not, they would as soon embrace death and hell, and throw away their own life, as do what they do.

3. Ye who have got such a discovery of Christ as has determined you to close with him, ye have found Christ, and happy are ye. All the people of God have not alike sensible enjoyment of Christ, Matth. xvii. 1, 2, nor alike measure of manifestations of him. Neither are their comforts of alike height, more than their downcastings are of alike depth. But that discovery of Christ which terminates in the soul's closing with him, is saving.

Use II. Of trial. Hereby ye may try whether ever ye have found Christ or not. We have been long making the fashion of seeking, let us try whether we have come speed or not. If ye have got such a discovery of him, as has terminated in your souls' closing with him, ye have found him. And ye may know it by these marks,

Mark 1. If ye have found Christ, ye will value the discovery as a matchless favour, and display of free grace, Matth. xiii. 44. Like as a poor man, travelling through a desert, in want of all things, would value his finding a covered table and all necessaries; so will the soul that has been seeking rest through the empty creation, and is still disappointed, value the discovery of a full Christ made to it, Psalm cxix. 162. Ye will admire free grace in it, and not impute it to your own pains and diligence, that ever ye had any acquaintance with him.

Mark 2. A found Christ will engage your esteem above all other persons and things, 1 Pet. ii. 7. He will be in your eyes the chief among ten thousand. The world, and all that is in it will be but loss and dung in comparison of him, Psalm lxxiii. 25. However low thoughts ye had of him before, the market will be raised now, and the rate ye will put on him will be so high, as the compass of the whole world, nay, the compass of men's desires will not be able to afford an equivalent, and as good, Prov. viii. 11.

Mark 3. The discovery of Christ in his glory, will shew sin in ugly colours, and fill a soul with self-loathing and abhorrence, Job xlii. 5, 6; Isa. vi. 5. Delusion puffeth up, but real manifestations of Christ are humbling. As in the balances, one scale goes up when

the other goes down; so the more Christ is exalted in the eyes of a sinner, the more sin and self are depressed. Doves' dung and asses' heads gave a great price in Samaria, when bread was not to be had, but when it came they were no more valued. That light will discover the worthlessness even of one's duties, and shew one's own righteousness like a moth-eaten garment, held up before the sun, Isa. lxiv. 6; and leave one poor in spirit before the Lord.

Mark 4. A found Christ will engage the sinner's heart and affections, loosing the bond betwixt them and other lovers, and dispose the soul to say, as Isa. xxvi. 13, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." There is an overcoming glory in him, which being discerned does infallibly give him the preference in the heart to all competitors, Tit. ii. 11. A believing view of his glory fills the heart with desire after him, and love to him above and beyond all other things, Isa. xxvi. 9; Cant. i. 3. Many a stroke the law, perhaps, has given to break the bonds of iniquity; but still they hold the sinner fast. But when the gospel fire is set on in the soul, and thereby Christ is discovered in his matchless excellency to the soul, these bonds are burnt and melted down.

Mark 5. Christ being found, the sinner parts with all for him, without reserve; and when he has quitted all for him, he thinks he has a good bargain, Matth. xiii. 46. Where any reserve is made, there is no saving discovery of Christ made there, who in his first appearance in the soul saith effectually, "If ye take me, let these go their way." The soul parts with all sin; (1.) In respect of affliction, Rom. vii. 19. (2.) Of voluntary subjection, Rom. vi. 14. (3.) Of allowed residence, Rom. vii. 24. It parts with self too. (1.) Civil self, friends, credit, ease, &c., Luke xvi. 26; Heb. xi. 24, 25; Deut xxxiii. 9. (2.) Natural self, even life itself is at his disposal. All that a man hath will he give for his life; but one will not give a found Christ for it, Luke xiv. 26. And (3.) Religious self is parted with, whereby the soul "counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," Phil. iii.

Mark 6. A saving discovery of Christ transforms the soul into his image. The sight of the most beautiful object on earth cannot work a likeness to it on the beholders; but a manifestation of Christ does it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Love breeds likeness, and likeness nourishes love, and none see Christ in his glory, but they love him, and therefore do put on Christ, Rom xiii. ult.; labouring to walk as he walked, 1 John ii. 6. From that moment the soul finds Christ, it commences nonconformist to the world, being transformed, cast into another mould, in respect of nature and actions, Rom. xii. 2. And when at

death the discovery shall be perfect, so will holiness be, 1 John iii. 2.

Mark 7. They that have once had a saving discovery of Christ, will always desire further discoveries of him, till they see him as he is, Exod. xxxiii. 18, "Shew me thy glory," will be the language of their hearts. Here we have the bridegroom's picture as it were in ordinances, in the word; and they who have once seen the beauty of it, will always be desiring more. Paul knew much of Christ, but his eye was not satisfied with seeing, Phil. iii. 10. Christ was the sum of his life, Phil. i. 21; the body of divinity to which he desired to confine his studies, 1 Cor. ii. 2; for in the knowledge of Christ all religion lies; therefore the learning of Christianity is the learning of Christ, Eph. iv. 20, 21.

Doctrine II. Sinners finding Christ, find life.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall;

I. Unfold that life which sinners find, finding Christ.

II. Confirm the point,

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I shall unfold that life which sinners find finding Christ. They find a treasure who find Christ, a treasure of life. To open it up, I will shew,

1. What life they find who find Christ.

2. What are the qualities of this life.

*First*, I will shew what life they find who find Christ. It is a life that goes as wide as the death they found in Adam; Rom. v. 11, "For if through the offence of any one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." It is a salve proportioned to that sore. The sinner's finding life in Christ implies, that without Christ, he is under death, which therefore we shall take along with us. And always the more of Christ, the more life; and the less of Christ, the less life. The sinner then finding Christ, finds,

1. A life of grace, in regeneration, which is a spiritual quickening of the soul; Eph. ii. 5, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Man in his natural unconverted state, is spiritually dead, Eph. ii. 1. Adam eating the forbidden fruit, poisoned himself and all his offspring, for it brought immediate death to them; it separated them from God the fountain of life; and so they lie in their natural state, as buried in the grave of sin, void of all life and sense in spiritual things.

But in the day of the soul's finding Christ, the Spirit of Christ enters into it, and quickens it, as Lazarus's soul entering into his body, while Christ stood by his grave. So the dead soul is raised,

the dry bones come together, and are made to live. The man is endowed with a new vital principle, putting him in a capacity to move and act graciously, Gal. ii. 20. He is a new creature, as one raised from the dead. There is a new light let into his mind, a new set given to his will, a new regulation made on his affections; all is new, as by a first resurrection.

2. A life of favour with God; Psalm xxx. 5, "In his favour is life." God is Lord of life and death, and we have forfeited our life to him by our rebellions. May not one say then, he is a dead man, who is out of God's favour; and he is secured for life, who enjoys it? A sinner out of Christ is a dead man, in so far as he is dead in law, and the broken law has doomed him to die eternally, Gal. iii. 10. All the fearful threats and curses of the first covenant, are twisted about him as so many cords of death, binding him as a condemned criminal, till the day of execution.

But the sinner finding Christ, the sentence of condemnation is reversed, he is no more a condemned man, Rom. viii. 1. Christ comes into the iron-house, makes a discovery of himself to the sinner in chains, and there the match is made betwixt the Bridegroom and the captive daughter of Zion. The prison-garments are taken off, and the marriage-robe is put on the believer, Phil. iii. 9. Then God says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. So the chains of guilt drop off, and the prison-doors are set open to Christ to hand out his spouse by, and the face-covering that was on the condemned is destroyed. Now, who has anything to say, why the prisoner may not go forth free with her Lord and Husband? Rom. viii. 33. Justice is satisfied, who had the claim against her; the law that laid her up, and kept her bound, has no more to demand, Gal. ii. 20. The debt is paid, the bond is got up, and torn in pieces, Col. ii. 14. The jailor therefore cannot keep her longer, and death which stood before her with a devouring mouth, is swallowed up in victory, Isa. xxv. 8.

3. A life of new obedience; Rom. vi. 4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." By nature we are quite void of this life, John xv. 5. The soul in its natural state is never idle indeed, but ever working; but then all its works are dead works, Heb. ix. 14, which can never please the living God. The old man has his deeds in them that are out of Christ, and all their deeds are so; their very religious duties are dead works, and in them they are but as walking ghosts. They cannot perform one vital action in a spiritual sense; Gen. vi. 5, Psalm xiv. 3, Tit. i. 15.

But the sinner finding Christ finds newness of life. He is not the man he was. Christ not only brings him out of the grave of his natural state but he looses all his grave-clothes of reigning lusts, and sets him a-pulling them off, and casting them from him; Col. iii. 8. He gives them change of raiment. The man puts on Christ, personates him, walking as he also walked. Now his obedience is universal, Psalm cxix. 6; his heart is shaped out in breadth and length to the whole law of Christ. It is spiritual; it is a cluster of vital actions, whereof Christ is the principle; Gal. ii. 20, and the end Phil. i. 21.

4. A life of comfort. *Non vivere valere sed est vita*; 1 Sam. xxv. 6. 1 Thess. iii. 8. The natural man has the most uncomfortable life in the world. He has no solid ground of comfort, because matters are quite wrong betwixt Heaven and him; he has no actual comfort, but as it were in a dream, when he drinks of the broken cisterns, so as to forget his misery: Job xv. 21.

But the sinner finding Christ finds a life of comfort. He is put into a comfortable state, as reconciled to God, and having his sin pardoned; Psalm xxxii. 1. And if at any time he want comfort, it is not because the ground of it is rased, for that can never be while the everlasting covenant remains, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, but because his eyes are held that he cannot perceive it, like Hagar at the well. And in his deepest sorrows and distress, there is a seed of comfort that will spring up; Psalm xcvii. 11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

5. *Lastly*, Eternal life; John xvii. 3. Man in his natural state is a dead man, liable to eternal death in hell. And whosoever lives and dies in that state,cannot miss to perish for ever; Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore whenever God opens the sinner's eyes to see his own case, he sees he is eternally lost if he get not help; Acts ii. 37.

But the sinner finding Christ finds eternal life; John iii. *ult.* The second death can have no power over him, from that happy moment. He commences an heir of glory, and heaven's happiness is secured to him. Come death when it will, come judgment when it will, his happy state is already determined by the word, and can never be reversed.

*Secondly*, I shall shew what are the qualities of the life which they find who find Christ.

1. It is a divine life; Eph. iv. 18. So it is the most excellent life. The vegetative life, by which our bodies grow, is common to us with the plants of the earth; the life of sense, with brutes; the life of reason, with infidels; but this life exalts one to a rank of beings superior to the rest of mankind, namely, into the rank of saints partakers of the divine nature.

2. It is a life of the whole man. Sinners out of Christ are but half alive, and that in the worst half too, while their bodies are alive, their souls are dead within them; 1 Tim. v. 6. But on the soul's finding Christ, the soul is made alive too, and so the whole man lives; the better part is quickened. And as the dead souls of the wicked will secure the eternal death of their bodies too, death spreading itself from their souls to their bodies; so the life of the soul will secure the eternal life of the body, life spreading in like manner from the soul to the body; Rom. viii. 11.

3. It is a pleasant life; Prov. iii. 17. Sinners are generally prejudiced in the case, as if it were an unpleasant and uncomfortable life; but that is the opinion only of those who are unacquainted with it; for David could say, Psalm iv. 7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." It is true, the pleasure of it is not expressed in the noisy way in which the world expresses theirs; it is a water that runs deeper than to make such a noise as the shallow brooks and muddy streams of the world's pleasures do. But all the pleasantries of the men of the world, are light as a feather in comparison of the pleasure found in communion with God, the sense of his favour, and the serenity of conscience; by this good token, that these will bear up a man in the greatest distresses, where those others evanish at the blast; Hab. iii. 17.

4. It is a persevering life, that can never be lost; Hab. ii. 4, "The just shall live by his faith." Compare Heb. x. 38. It is a life that, from the moment it is given, shall never die out for ever; John iv. 14. The life of inherent grace may be very low, but can never be lost; one may lose the sense of the life of favour with God, but can never lose the thing itself; John v. 24. They that now lead the most honourable and wealthy life in the world, death will put an end to it; but this life will make its way through death itself, unhurt.

5. *Lastly*, It is a growing life; John x. 10. It is true, the Christian life is not always growing, more than the trees in winter. But it is a life that grows universally, regularly, and proportionably, till it come to its perfection in glory; Prov. iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It buds in regeneration, begins to open in progressive sanctification, and is full spread in glory; but it shall never wither, but be fresh and fragrant through eternity.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, That sinners finding Christ find life, consider,

1. The Mediator, by the Father's appointment, is the immediate

receptacle of life for all to whom life is designed by the Father, Col. i. 19; as the bowl in Zechariah's candlestick received the oil from the two olive-trees, and communicated the same by the pipes to the lamps; Zech. iv. 2, 3. God seeing all mankind dead in Adam, but having destined the elect number to life, has put life for them all in the Mediator, as in a sure repository, where it cannot be lost; 1 John v. 11, hence the apostle draws the conclusion of our text; ver. 12, "He that hath the Son, hath life;" even as he who hath a woman in marriage, hath all that is hers; so he that hath Christ, not only hath a right to, but actually hath life, even everlasting life; ver. 13; John v. 24. He that buys the field hath the treasure in it.

2. As Adam lost his life, and that of all his posterity, by his losing of God, who is the life and soul of the soul of man; Psalm xxx. 5, in separation of the soul from whom its death lies; so the sinner finding Christ finds God again, and therefore must needs find life. God is in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead is in him; Col. ii. 9, and by him the believer comes to God; Heb. vii. 25, for that was the end of his death, "that he might bring us to God;" 1 Pet. iii. 18. The Father becomes his Father, the Son his Saviour, the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier; for a whole Trinity is made over to the sinner in the covenant "I am thy God." So finding Christ, the sinner finds the whole Trinity of persons; how then can he but find life?

3. The sinner finding Christ finds the Spirit of life. This is so certain, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. Not only do the graces of the Spirit dwell in them who have found Christ, but the person of the Spirit, the cause of the other; Rom. viii. 11. This is that which gives them life, preserves it that it cannot be lost, increaseth it, and at length perfects it; John iv. 14. We see many who getting some light touches and common operations of the Spirit, seem to live for a while; but their seeming life wears away by degrees, and they never recover it; why? because not having found Christ, they have not found life, nor the Spirit either. But believers are recovered from their decays, because the Spirit of life still remains with them.

4. The sinner finding Christ, is united to him as a member of his body; Eph. iii. 17. Hence his life secures theirs; John xiv. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." They cannot die, as long as he lives, and therefore their life is everlasting. As members of Christ, the Spirit of Christ dwells in them, as the principle of their life; and they derive spiritual nourishment from him, as the branches from the vine-stock. Hence it is that the resurrection of their mortal bodies is secured to them, according to Rom. viii. 11, "But if the

Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." So that finding Christ, they find everlasting life of soul and body.

5. The sinner finding Christ, finds all the promises of the everlasting covenant, which are all promises of life, as the threatenings of the law are of death; Tit. i. 2; 2 Cor. i. 20; for the promises are immediately made to Christ; Gal. iii. 16, and in right of him they become ours. Hence "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. Some would reckon themselves made up all their life, if they did find a parcel of bank-bills; but he that finds Christ, finds heaven's bank-bills, which being presented to God, will get payment of them to the bearer, be who he will, and that such as will make him live happily through the ages of eternity.

6. The sinner finding Christ, finds a satisfactory answer to all the law's demands, which staves him off from life till they be satisfied. (1.) The law demands the debt of perfect obedience, if the sinner will have life; Matth. xix. 17. In Christ this is answered; for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" Rom. x. 4. (2.) It demands the debt of punishment, for satifaction of justice for sin done. The answer is, "I am crucified with Christ;" Gal. ii. 20. Thus he has found a complete righteousness, in which the law itself can find no blemish nor defect. Thus the current of death towards the believer is stopped, and the waters of the curse are dried up; and life flows into the soul, and the blessing comes in room of the curse.

7. *Lastly*, To sum up all in a word, The sinner finding Christ, finds all things necessary to make him happy. See the believer's possessions, what he gets with Christ when he gets him; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" There is a treasure in him, or he is a treasure, and the treasure becomes the believer's; Matth. xiii. 44. There are unsearchable riches in him, and they are all made over to the believer; Eph. iii. 8. Look to the whole of Christ's purchase, what he bought for poor sinners with his blood, and the soul finding Christ finds it all, and may say, It is all mine.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this branch of the text.

Use I. Of information. This informs us,

1. That the best way for one's security in an evil day, is to have found Christ. This is a day of impending wrath, wherein God is threatening to cause death overflow the nation.* The true way to answer God's call in the dispensation of the day, is to seek Christ, that ye may find him; so shall ye find life.

1*st*, God is threatening to take away men's substance, the means of life, making the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron.† He has locked up in great measure the pastures of the field, so that the beasts groan under the sins of men. And no wonder, considering the sinful improvement that has been made of their prosperity. But if all should go together, it cannot break the true Christian, who finding Christ has found life, and may say as Hab. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

2*dly*, God is threatening to make death ride in triumph among men. He has been sweeping away multitudes abroad; and how can these nations think to escape, nations lying under the fearful guilt of former times, and who have been long busied in filling up their cup to the brim? All ranks in church and in state have corrupted their ways; and when we consider the unnatural marriages, and unnatural murders, that have fallen out more than at any time ever I remember, I cannot but take them for presages, that the things which concern this generation are making haste, the hearing of which will make men's ears to tingle. Well, Sirs, happy are they that find Christ; for they shall find life, when death in its most frightful aspect shall seize a God-provoking generation, and make all their courage fail in one moment, never to recover.

2. There is no way to attain to holiness, and acceptable obedience in good works, without finding of Christ, or closing with him upon a saving discovery of him made to the soul. Find what we will, if we find not Christ, we will remain in a state of death; and all the reasons and motives that can be fetched from heaven or hell, will not quicken us; and therefore cannot put us upon the doing of the least good work; for, says Christ, "without me ye can do nothing," John xxv. 5. It is true, that, as, in an earthquake, dead bodies may fly from one place to another, by the force of commotion, yet still

* Referring to the plague which had then broke out in France, and proved very mortal in several places, particularly at Marseilles.

† This refers to a great drought in spring, 1721.

void of life ; so an unbeliever, by the fear of punishment and hope of reward, may work, as one for his life ; but alas ! his works are but dead works still.

3. The true way to holiness is the finding of Jesus Christ; John vi. 28, 29, " Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." If ever ye would be holy, believe ; if ye would reach the highway called the way of holiness, betake yourselves to him who is the way, and the truth, and the life ; John xiv. 6. As the dead man (2 Kings xiii. 21,) let down into Elisha's grave, as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha, revived, and stood up on his feet ; so the dead soul meeting with Christ by participation of his Spirit is quickened. And as a wick put to a burning lamb is lighted, so as immediately they join flames, and burn on ; so the soul finding Christ finds life, embraces him, and lives by him and to him.

4. Christ does not set his people to work for life, to procure life to themselves by their own working ; he has given them life, a life that will never end, in their union with them, and bids them work from that life. The law or covenant of works says to them who are under it, Do this, and live ; if ye will have life, work and win it ; Matth. xix. 17. But Christ says to the poor tired creature, busy at labour in vain, Come to me that you may have life. And having come and received life, he sets it to work.

5. Faith and obedience are inseparable ; John xv. 5, " He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Rom. vi. 14, " Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The life that sinners find, finding Christ is without question, for the kind of it, a holy life ; and the manner of one's working must needs be of a piece with the manner of one's being. When Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men to herd with the beasts of the field, he lived like the beasts. Men living in sin, walk in it ; Col. iii. 7. And those who are blessed with a life that is holy in the nature of it, must needs be holy in their walk ; and if that life were perfected, they would be perfectly holy. So where there is no holiness, there is no life, no faith, no union with the holy Jesus. Unholy professors are dead sinners, and will be buried out of sight in the pit ; Heb. xii. 14, " Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

6. *Lastly*, The one thing we have to seek above all things, for time and eternity, is to find Christ. For whoso findeth him findeth life, for time and eternity. And this is not the work only of the time

of our first conversion to God, but the work of our whole lives, 1 Pet. ii. 4, compared with vers. 2, 3. For always the more we find of Christ, we have the more life, and the less of him, the less life. Finding Christ we find all for holiness and happiness. The Jews say, that the 613 precepts of the law are all reduced to this saying, Hab. ii. 4, "The just shall live by his faith." And the truth is, the sum of the Christian life lies here; Gal. ii. 20,

Use. II. Of exhortation. Seek Christ until ye find him, and find life in him and by him. To press this, I offer the following motives.

Motive 1. Man is a seeking creature: Matth. xiii. 45. Sinners out of Christ are as busy seeking as others are, like the watch going as fast when wrong as when right. There is a void within that would be filled; but the matter is, they go all wrong in their search, They are seeking a rest to their hearts in the creature, and a rest to their conscience in the works of the law; but in neither of these will they find what they seek. Turn ye, sinners, seek Christ; why seek ye the living among the dead? In Christ only is to be found what ye are seeking, rest to the conscience and to the heart.

Motive 2. Now is the time he is to be found; Isa. lv. 6. The day will come when he will not be to be found; and so the sinner has no more access to life. Remember the case of the foolish virgins; Matth. xxv. That is a heavy word; Prov. i. 24, 26, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." And how stinging will it then be to think, that the time of seeking Christ was spent in seeking what cannot profit; and that then all access to him is lost for ever.

Motive *ult.* Ye will be made up for ever, if ye find Christ; and undone, if ye find him not; Prov. viii. 35, 36. If one was taken up all the days of his life, seeking him, and should find him at last, all would be found to be well bestowed; Matth. xiii. 45, 46. And find what we will, if we should find all the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world, it would not compensate the loss of a missed Saviour; Matth. xvi. 26. But I will branch out this exhortation in two particulars,

*First*, Sinners, seek to find Christ, and to find life in him, by getting a saving discovery of him made to your souls. To press seeking of this saving discovery, consider,

Mot. 1. There is no closing with Christ, or believing in him, without a saving discovery of him made to the soul; Psalm ix. 10; John iv. 10. Men may believe in an unseen, but not an unknown Christ. There is an illumination in the knowledge of Christ, that is

necessary towards the embracing of him. Without it the wounded soul will pine away in its wounds, not knowing the Physician; and the sinner in his sins, not knowing the Saviour.

2. All your labour in religion, without this, will be but working in the dark, and labour in vain; John xiv. 6, compared with Eccl. x. 15. What will all attainments in religion avail, without the knowledge of the main thing, *i. e.* the knowledge of Christ? Matth. vii. 22, we find some prophesying in Christ's name, in his name casting out devils, and in his name doing many wonderful works, who lose all their pains, because there was no saving acquaintance betwixt Christ and them.

3. The discovery of Christ is the most excellent discovery that men are capable of. Therefore Paul determined to seek after nothing but that; 1 Cor. ii. 2; he preferred it to all other things; Phil. iii. 8. What though men be ever so well acquainted with the nature of the creation, and can dive into the secret mysteries of nature, with the reasons of the same? if they be unacquainted with Christ, it is but a bewitching vanity, and a gilded ignorance.

The knowledge of Christ appears to be the most noble, if one considers, (1.) The superlative excellency of the object; Col ii. 9, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (2.) The way and manner one comes to this knowledge. Not by the light of nature; this cannot discover Christ to a soul; not by mere objective revelation in the word; men may indeed learn much of Christ that way, but may go to hell for it all; but by the light of the Spirit and subjective revelation; Matth. xvi. 16, 17. (3.) The certainty of it, which surpasses all demonstration; Heb. xi. 1. (4.) The usefulness of it. Other knowledge men may have, and perish with it; all the arts and sciences in the world cannot give life to the soul; but this is life, eternal life to them that have it; John xvii. 3. Wherefore all other researches are but laborious trifling, unless in so far as they are subservient to this.

4. Christ discovered in his glory will satisfy your souls, and arrest your hearts; Matth. xiii. 45, 46, "Be shut my eyes and ears," saith Luther, "and say, you know no God out of Christ, none but he that was in the lap of Mary, and sucked her breasts." What is the reason of the apostasy and backsliding of many, but that they were never brought into this inner court of religion? If they had, they had been held fast. They had seen in him what is fully commensurate to the desires of a soul, and therefore had no occasion to have gone back unto the world and their lusts. This would be an anchor of the soul, in the midst of temptations, troubles, persecutions, and losses, arising from whatever quarter they may; and is the absolutely best way to fix the heart.

5. Christ is a vailed beauty, an unknown Christ to the most part of the hearers of the Gospel, and to all those to whom the Holy Spirit has not given saving illumination, Cant. v. 9, compare John i. 10. Beware he continue not to be so unto you. Seek to get the vail removed, that ye may see that in Christ, which the world left to perish in their iniquity never sees. The leading difference betwixt the wise and the foolish builders, and the wise and the foolish virgins was, the one had illumination, the other had not.

6. *Lastly*, Without a saving discovery of Christ, ye perish, John xvii. 3. Isa. liii. 11. Ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with Christ must needs be fatal to the soul, since he is the only way to the Father, and there is no salvation in any other. It is the great design of the Gospel to bring souls acquainted with Jesus Christ; so where that is not reached, the gospel has not its effect; and where the gospel has not a saving effect, the law will take effect to one's condemnation.

I shall give you some directions for obtaining this discovery of Christ.

Direction 1. Labour to be acquainted with yourselves, your own sinfulness and misery. And for that cause lay your hearts, lives, and state, to the rule of the holy law. Conviction leads the way to saving illumination, the knowledge of the disease to that of the physician, Acts xvi. 30, 31.

2. Seek the discovery of Christ in your attendance on public ordinances, Prov. viii. 34. These are the galleries where the king walks, the lattices by which he shews himself. See Psalm xlv. 8. There is the market where the eye-salve is to be bought of him. There Lydia's heart was opened. It is good to be in Christ's way, as Zaccheus was. And were we looking and longing for a discovery of him there, we would not long want it.

3. Seek the discovery of him in his written word, the scriptures, for they are they which testify of Christ, John v. 39. God's word is the great means of illumination; Psalm xix. 8. The Psalmist found it to be so by experience, Psalm cxix. 130, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." It is the special instrument the Spirit uses for illumination.

4. Seek it earnestly in prayer, Prov. ii. 3—5. When the disciples were together at prayer, the doors being shut, he manifested himself unto them. We are not to expect bodily discoveries of Christ; if we had them, they would not do our turn; the Jews saw him so who believed not on him; but we are to seek a discovery of Christ in the glory of his person and offices, by the Spirit, which alone can be attended with saving effects.

5. *Lastly*. Whenever the Lord lets in the least beam of heavenly

light into your souls, cherish it, though it may be painful by discovering your sin and misery; make much of it; after little, more may come, Hos. vi. 3.

*Secondly*, Seek to find Christ and life in him, by getting an interest in him. The soul then finds Christ, and has life, when it has got an interest in him. If you enquire how that interest is got? It is through faith. God hath given to us eternal life in the free offer of the gospel, and that life is in his Son, 1 John v. 11. Believe the word of the gospel with particular application to yourselves, receive and rest on him siducially for life, the life of grace and glory, and ye have it. Wherefore come to Christ, that ye may have life. To press this, consider,

Motive 1. Ye are to come to Christ, that ye may get life in and by him, Isa. lv. 1, 2, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here is an invitation to life, let not that complaint be made of you, John v. 40, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Consider,

1*st*, It is an offer the fallen angels never got. When Christ was born there was good-will towards men, but no sign of it towards fallen angels. Yet they are in themselves a rank of beings superior to mankind, and he owed no more to us than to them. Only his sovereign pleasure made the difference. "How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

2*dly*, It is an invitation not given to millions in the world, who are the sons of Adam as well as we. Many kingdoms and empires in the world lie in darkness and the shadow of death, and no offer of life is made to them; but it is made to you.

3*dly*, It is the greatest offer that ever was or shall be, that heaven can give and earth receive, admired by angels, and grudged by devils; and shall it be slighted by men? even an offer of the son of God, and eternal life in him.

4*thly*, It is an offer frequently repeated. Now sinner, Christ is boding himself and eternal life upon you. You have given him many refusals, but he will not yet take your refusal, but continues the offer.

Motive 2. Christ is very willing to give himself, and eternal life in himself to you, John vi. 37. Consider,

1*st*, How ample and large the gospel offer is, excluding none that will come, Isa. lv. 1, forecited. Rev. xxii. 17, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

2*dly*, There is no case a sinner can be in, that shall mar his reception with Christ, and partaking of life, if he will come to Christ; Isa. i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Manasseh's bloodshed and witchcraft, Paul's blasphemy and persecution, and Mary Magdalene's lewdness, hindered not their getting life in and by Christ. When he was in the world, he raised Lazarus when sinking in the grave, as well as the ruler's daughter newly dead.

3*dly*, He takes kindly notice of the sinner's first steps towards him; the father met the prodigal son while yet a great way off. See Jer. xxxi. 18—20. He surprises souls with looks of kindness preventing them, Is. lxv. 1, as he did Paul, Zaccheus, and others.

4*thly*, He is at great pains with sinners to bring them to himself for life. He stands and knocks; by convictions, surprising mercies, rods, and crosses, he says in effect, "Why will ye die?"

Motive 3. Ye are commanded to come to him, that ye may have life; 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." All the gospel invitations are commands; so that it is not left to you whether to come or not; but ye are peremptorily enjoined. Consider,

1*st*, Ye are creatures owing obedience to the commands of your sovereign Lord; and therefore trample not on his gospel command.

2*dly*, How highly merciful and reasonable this command is. All God's commandments are most righteous, Psalm cxix. 128. But behold this is an eminently merciful and reasonable one, that the creature should seek the favour of its Creator; that man should be at peace with God; that the poor sinner should go to the rich Saviour, the sick to the Physician, the guilty flee to the city of refuge and live, and the dying soul have recourse to the fountain of life. And all this under the pain of God's displeasure.

3*dly*, What a mercy it is that there is not a countermand; that when Adam and his offspring fell, God did not forbid them ever to hope for the least grain of mercy; but graciously invites and intreats, yea, and commands them to come and partake of his favour?

4*thly*, It is such a command, that if it be not obeyed, God has no value for all other obedience, 1 John iii. 23, John vi. 29.

Mot. 4. Ye need Christ, and ye need life; ye have an absolute need of both. Do ye not need grace, the favour of God, pardon of sin, the light of his countenance, the influences of his Spirit, the

manifestations of his love? Without these ye can never be happy, but eternally miserable. O then seek to find Christ, and life in him.

Use. *Ult.* Hereby ye may try whether ye have found Christ or not. The soul yet dead in sin hath not found him; but where there is spiritual life, Christ is found by that soul. How shall one know whether he be spiritually dead or alive? I will offer but three marks.

Mark 1. Spiritual light, not only let into the conscience, but into the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 6, John viii. 12. And that may be known by these two things.

(1.) The discovery it makes. The light of life shews a man his former darkness, making him say, "Once was I blind, but now I see." It discovers sin in its sinfulness, not only as dangerous, but as loathsome and abominable; the sinfulness of heart-sins as well as of life-sins; the first movings of sin, as well as of sin ripened by consent or action; the man's own utter inability to help himself, and the need of Christ both for justification, and sanctification; Christ's preciousness, and perfect suitableness to the sinner's case. This is the discovery made by the light of life, or saving illumination, Luke xv. 17, 1 Pet. ii. 17.

(2.) The efficacy it hath on the soul, Matth. iii. 11. There are many who have a great deal of light; but it has no more efficacy on them to bring them from sin to holiness, than painted fire has to burn. But the light of life humbles the soul before God; causes grief for sin and hatred of of it, as contrary to God's holy nature and will; a holy despairing of help by ourselves or any other creature; and a betaking one's self to Christ for all, for pardon, and favour with God, for holiness and happiness, Phil. iii. 3.

Mark 2. Where there is spiritual life there is spiritual sense and feeling. In spiritual death all the senses of the soul, so to speak, are locked up; and they may be at some times very dull in those who are spiritually alive. But it is evident, that in the quickening of the soul they are restored, and never lost again altogether. The eyes of the soul are opened to see God, Christ, sin, the world, and all things that concern the soul, in other colours than formerly. They hear his voice in his word and in his rod, and they discern it from all others, Cant. v. 2, so that their great business is to answer his call. They have tasted that the Lord is gracious; they have the witness in themselves, that there is something in religion more desirable than all the profits and pleasures of the world, John v. 10. They can say from their experience, that all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, Psalm xlv. 8, that everything about Christ is lovely and desirable. The fulness of grace lodged in him, is sa-

voury to them, Cant. i. 3. Their sense of feeling is awakened; the burden of sin they sometime went lightly under, makes them groan now, and long to be rid of it, as ever a poor prisoner was of his chains; Rev. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Every limb of that body is a weight to them. And they are sensible of Christ's goings and comings, his hidings and manifestations of himself, and the power of his grace; Psalm xxx. 7, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

Mark 3. Where there is spiritual life, there is a kindly heat and warmth of the same kind. There is a threefold flame kindled in the believer in the day of his being restored to life, though it acts not alike vigorously in all, nor in the same person alike at all times.

(1.) There is a flame of holy desires; Isa. xxvi. 9. They have longing desires after righteousness, both imputed and implanted; Matth. v. 6, they are set for the one as well as the other. They have ardent desires after communion with God in Christ; Psalm xlii. 1. Hence the secret cries of the soul, O that I knew where I might find him! O when wilt thou come unto me!

(2.) There is a flame of love to Christ; Rom. v. 5. They love him above all persons and things; Luke xiv. 26. They love his truths, his whole word; his commands, though striking against their corruptions; Rom. vii. 22, his promises, as the sweetest cordials to a soul fainting under the apprehensions of wrath, or prevailing of corruption; the threatening of his word approving them heartily as most just; Rom. vii. 12. Their hearts warm to any in whom God's image appears, and that because of that image; 1 John iii. 14. They love his ordinances; Psalm lxxxiv. 1, because they are his institutions, and the appointed means of communion with him.

(3.) There is a flame of zeal for Christ; Psalm lxix. 9. They are concerned for his honour in the world, the thriving of his kingdom. It vents itself in indignation against sin in themselves and others, because of the dishonour it reflects on Christ; 2 Cor. vii. 11, in endeavouring to be active for God in their station, and grieving for the ills which they cannot help, saying with David, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," Psalm cxix. 136.

## SINNERS INTERESTED IN CHRIST, OBTAINING FAVOUR OF THE LORD.

PROVERBS viii. 35,

*Whoso findeth me,—shall obtain favour of the Lord.*

BY the favour of the Lord is not meant reconciliation, or a state of favour with God, for that is comprehended in the life found; but the benefits, fruit, and effects of God's favour, all along from the time the sinner is taken into favour. The word rendered obtained, signifies to bring forth as out of a treasure or storehouse. This treasure is open to the sinner, and access to it granted him, upon his union with Christ, so that from thence he may afterwards bring forth as he needs.

The doctrine deducible from the words is,

DOCTRINE. A sinner once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord, bringing it forth as out of a treasure to which he is allowed access.

In handling this point, I shall,

1. Shew some things supposed in this truth, tending to clear the meaning of it.

II. Wherein the soul once interested in Christ shall obtain favour of the Lord.

III. Confirm the doctrine.

IV. Apply.

I. I will shew some things supposed in this truth, tending to clear the meaning of it.

1. There is a treasure of favour for poor sinners with the Lord; Matth. xiii. 44, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field," &c. A treasure speaks preciousness, variety, and abundance. God's favours are precious, because of his infinite excellency; there is a variety of them, suited to all the cases the sinner can be in; and there is abundance of them, an inexhaustible stock, sufficient to supply them all, and that at all times.

2. This treasure is locked on sinners out of Christ, they have no access to it, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. There is favour with God, but it is not for such sinners; the treasure of wrath is their treasure, Rom. ii. 5. They have no saving interest in the Mediator, therefore no saving interest in the treasure of favour. It is hid in the field of the gospel; but the field is not theirs, so not the treasure neither.

3. The sinner once interested in Christ has free access to the treasure, to bring forth from thence whatever he needs; hence says the apostle, Heb. iv. 14, 16, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, —let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. But it may be objected, Is there not free access to that treasure of favour proclaimed to all to whom the gospel comes? Answ. It is so. But we may conceive, as it were, a twofold door of this treasure; the outer door, in the free offer of the gospel, the inner door, even Jesus Christ himself. Both are closed on fallen angels; the outer door is opened to sinners of the tribe of Adam, that they may freely partake of it, if they will come in by the inner door; but till they enter by this last, they cannot reach it. But the sinner once interested in Jesus Christ is put in possession of the treasure, so as to have access to it at any time thereafter, when he is disposed to bring forth favour out of it; John x. 9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

4. Even the sinner when he is interested in Christ, will still be needing, while he is in this world. It is true, he will never be again reduced to the extremity of total want, John iv. 14, but he will be under partial wants while he lives here, John xiii. 10. And there is such an emptiness woven into the very nature of the creature, that the saints in heaven, though they will feel no want, yet will not become self-sufficient by glorification.

5. *Lastly.* As it is the privilege of believers, that they may, so it is their duty that they do, bring forth and fetch supply for all their wants out of that treasure. They must still have recourse to it, in all exigencies; and they are welcome to it. They are let into it, by their union with Christ, and they should make use of it in their daily walk. And when they come to heaven, they shall be filled from it for evermore, Rev. vii. 17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

II. I proceed to shew wherein the soul once interested in Christ shall obtain favour of the Lord. They shall obtain it in all things, cases, and conditions, which they meet with or shall be in. The promise is broad and large, Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Rom. viii. 28, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." Go as it will with the nation, the church, or

themselves in particular, they shall always obtain favour. But it will not be amiss to condescend on some particulars. They shall obtain favour,

1. In prosperity, when things in the world are in a thriving condition with them. That is what destroys many, Prov. i. *ult.* but it shall not destroy them, and that is a great favour; Job i. 10, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath upon every side?" a hedge not only about his house, &c., but about him. Many have the former, while they want the latter, and so are ruined. There is a threefold favour that a gracious person may obtain of the Lord in this case.

(1.) Balancing grace, to make them carry evenly and usefully in prosperity. Job got it in his prosperity, chap. i. 5. The sun of prosperity shone on him, and he was helped of God to retain his tenderness, and to improve the smiles of outward providences to the honour of God. And considering what a corrupt nature the best have, and how slippery ground the world's heights are, they obtain favour of the Lord indeed, whom Satan gets not cast over that precipice to their ruin.

(2.) Balancing providences, some such mixture of bitterness in their cup, as keeps them from miskenning themselves, and makes them sing of mercy and judgment; as the apostle experienced in his own case; 2 Cor. xii. 7, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." It is no small favour to the Christian to have some thorn of uneasiness put under him while he is here, to keep him from lying down among the lions' dens and mountains of leopards, and sleeping in these dangerous places. Every rub a Christian meets with in his way through the world, is a memorandum for him, that "this is not his rest." If that do not prevail, there is,

(3.) The change of the course of providence into adversity. Many times that is as great a favour as a Christian can meet with; Zeph. iii. 12, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Sometimes the Christian begins to feather his nest, and lie secure and forgetful of God; but God sets fire to his nest, and he is obliged to look to God whom he had forgotten. The world grows a burden to him, and God raises a wind that blows the burden off his back. And he draws away some gilded earth from him, that was drawing his heart from God.

2. In personal outward afflictions, to which the people of God

are liable as well as others. O it is a sad case with Christless sinners, under affliction: they cry out under their trouble, but they are not bettered by it; Job xxxv. 9, 10. Nay, many are worsted by their afflictions, their spirits are embittered; they have no comfort from earth, and they have none, and apply for none from heaven. But the sinner once interested in Christ shall obtain favour in this case.

(1.) They shall be bettered by it; Rom. viii. 28, forecited. Though they may for a time be fruitless under affliction, and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, yet they shall be brought to themselves, and gain some spiritual advantage thereby. And that is no small favour, to gather figs of such thorns and briers.

(2.) They shall be supported under it; Isa. xliii. 2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Though with one hand they be cast down, they shall be held up with the other. They have fatherly pity and sympathy in all their afflictions, Isa. lxiii. 9, and in their hopeless case the everlasting arms are underneath them.

(3.) They shall have deliverance in due time, one way or other, that they shall not perish in their affliction. Though the night be ever so long, the morning cometh; the days of their mourning shall end; Psalm xxxiv. 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

3. In desertion. Christ's spouse may be under desertion; the Lord may withdraw and hide himself from those that are dear to him; they may for a time "walk in darkness, and see no light;" Isa. l. 10, "go mourning without the sun," and be so pressed that they cannot contain themselves from crying out; Job xxx. 28. All communication betwixt heaven and them may seem to be stopt and blocked up; Lam. iii. 8. They may be under fearful terrors from the Lord; Job vi. 4. And this case may be of long continuance with them, as in Heman; Psalm lxxxviii. 15, "I am afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." But in such a case they shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) They shall never be totally deserted or forsaken. Though the husband may withdraw, yet the relation shall never be broken, nor shall they go out of mind with him, though they may apprehend themselves to be forgotten; Isa. xlix. 14, 15, 16. They shall have now and then some gleam of light in their darkness, and a secret support shall never be wanting; Psalm cxii. 4; Deut. xxxiii. 27.

(2) They shall not be finally deserted; Isa. liv. 6. Though he may be gone, he will certainly return. There is a seed of joy sown, which though it lie never so long under the clod, it cannot rot, it will spring up; Psalm xcvii. 11. And for the spirit of heaviness they shall get the oil of joy. And the ill reports which unbelief has spread concerning a trying, hiding God, shall be proved false.

4. In temptation. While they are in the world, they are in a place of snares and temptations. Sometimes public temptations are going, compliance with which being fashionable it is hard to stand the shock. Private temptations are never wanting from a busy devil, an ensnaring world, and an evil heart. These are means of remediless ruin unto many. But in such a case they shall obtain favour of the Lord. They shall either,

1. Be made to keep their ground against the temptation, and stand conquerors; 2 Cor. xii. 9. They shall have grace to discover the snare, and grace to withstand the solicitations to comply with it. And that is a great favour bestowed on poor, weak, self-emptied Christians, in whom grace from the treasure of favour does triumph; while others leaning to themselves are suffered to fall; Isa. xl. 30, 31. The truth is there is no temptation so contemptible, but it will lay a self-confident man on his back; and none so great, but by faith the weakest Christian may get over it; Phil. iv. 13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

(2.) At least temptation shall not get a complete victory over them as over unbelievers; Luke xxii. 31, 32, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Satan carried Peter far, even to the denying of Christ; but yet he found favour, that he could not get him all the length he would have had him. They may fall deep in temptation, but they will not be suffered to drown; for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand, Psalm xxxvii. 24.

5. Even when fallen into sin, the Lord will not leave them, nor cast them off; Heb. xiii. 5. They grieve the Spirit by their falls; so they may expect in that case, that God will withdraw the light of his countenance, that he will set a mark of his indignation upon their way, and it may cost them broken bones ere they recover. Yet in this case they shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) God will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will raise them up again, John viii. 35. Some fall off, and are never recovered; but as for believers, not one of them shall be lost. God's love to them is through Jesus Christ; and forasmuch as he is always beloved of the Father, they shall ever be loved for his sake, Psalm lxxxix. 30—33. And love is active to raise up the beloved party fallen.

(2.) While he raiseth them up, he will make their falls work for good, Rom. viii. 28. Out of the eater shall be brought forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness. Satan shall be outshot in his own bow. They shall thereby be let into a clearer view of the corruption of their nature, see more need of Christ and his grace, be more emptied of themselves, and learn to prize imputed righteousness more, and so be led more to a life of faith, and close dependence on the Lord.

6. In a time of public calamity. We have all reason to look for such a time on this guilty declining generation, that God will sum up the old and new debts of Scotland, and charge them together upon the generation that is filling up the measure of our fathers. But come what will come, they that are once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) It may be they shall be hid, and kept out of trouble, that the stroke shall not reach them, Zeph. ii. 3. The floods may swell, yet he that sitteth on the floods can keep them from touching his own when he will; and often does so, Psalm xxxii. 6, "Surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him. Whatever be the stroke that is sent, every arrow has its commission, and can touch none whom God will have safe, Psalm xci. 7; as in the cases of Noah and Lot.

(2.) If it do fall upon them, they may expect a gracious mixture of favour in it; Jer. xv. 11, "The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction. And the Lord has often made his care of his people in common calamity, with the beautiful mixture of kindnesses with sharp trials, more desirable in the issue, than to have been kept quite free, Rom. v. 3. This made Paul take a pleasure in distresses, 2 Cor. xii. 10.

(3.) Though it should come to an extremity with the child of God, yet the sting shall be out of it, and so it shall do him no real harm. Death is the worst of it, but the child of God may meet it with that saying; 1 Cor. xv. 55, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The truth is, whereas the blessings of the wicked are cursed, the curses are changed into blessings to them that are in Christ, Rom. viii. 28.

7. *Lastly.* At death, and through all the ages of eternity. During life the wicked receive many common favours from the Lord, but at death that spring is quite dried up to them. But then the spring of favour to them that are in Christ, never to be interrupted any more, begins to flow abundantly. They shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) They shall then be perfectly freed from sin, and all inclination or temptation to it, Heb. xii. 23. They will then get a full answer to that petition, "Lead us not into temptation." The leprosy in the house will then be quite removed, when it is pulled down. And the body of sin shall breathe out its last with the death of the body.

(2.) They shall be freed from all trouble whatever, and enjoy perfect happiness in the full enjoyment of God, Rev. xiv. 13. At the last day their bodies shall obtain the favour of a blessed resurrection, and soul and body shall be eternally glorified together.

III. I shall next confirm the doctrine, That a sinner once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord. This is evident, if ye consider,

1. They have a right to the whole treasure of favour through Jesus Christ, in whom they are interested; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23, "All are yours; and ye are Christ's." It is the purchase of his precious blood, and a purchase made for them; and hence not only the love and mercy of God, but the justice of God secures their enjoyment of it, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

2. Jesus Christ is the dispenser of the treasure, the high Steward of the house of heaven. As he has purchased it by his blood, so the Father has put the dispensing or distributing of it in his hand, John v. 22, Matth. xxviii. 18. Now he is their best friend, yea, he is their husband, their head, and they are members of his body. How then can they miss of obtaining favour of the Lord.

3. The enjoyment of it is secured to them by the covenant of promises. In the covenant there are promises suited to every case they can be in; all these are "yea and amen in Christ." So being interested in Christ, they are interested in all the promises, 2 Pet. i. 4. These are the several articles of their marriage covenant with Christ, by which the whole treasure of the favour of God is settled upon Christ's espoused ones, for their throughbearing in time, and complete provision to all eternity.

4. *Lastly.* They have each of them a private key to the treasure, and that is faith; hence says our Lord, Matth. xxi. 22, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." There is a cloud of witnesses, Heb. xi., who did, and suffered great things; not by their own strength, but by furniture from heaven; and how did they obtain it, but by faith, that self-emptying, taking, receiving grace, out of Christ's fulness? They who can rightly manage this key, need never want, be their case as low as it can be; faith is a noble provider, bringing strength to the weak, light to the blind, food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, &c.

I shall shut up this doctrine with some improvement.

Use I. Of information. It informs us, that,

1. Jesus Christ is the way to the Father, and the only way, John xiv. 6. Whoso would obtain favour of the Lord, must make him their friend in the first place. For he is the one Mediator, and all communication that we have with Heaven must be by him. They who place their confidence of acceptance with God in their duties, will obtain indignation and wrath, instead of favour from the Lord. For in Christ only God is or can be well pleased with one that is a sinful creature.

2. Those who are interested in Christ are made up for ever, their bread is baken for time and eternity. They are provided for all conditions they can be in, or circumstances they can be brought into. This is a plentiful treasure, and a treasure that has no bottom, which is made over to them in Christ. Alas! that ever any losses in the world should disquiet a believer, that "has in heaven a better and an enduring substance," Heb. x. 34. He may put his gain in Christ in the balance with all worldly losses, and it will weigh them all down.

3. Those who are without Christ are without the favour of God, Eph ii. 12. Common favours they may receive, but special favour is far from them. The truth is, the best things they get are blasted to them; hence their prosperity destroys them, and the very gospel of God is the savour of death. How can they have the favour of a holy just God, who are not reconciled to him in his Son, and clothed with his righteousness?

4. *Lastly.* It is believers' own fault, that at any time they are not sufficiently provided according as their case requires. They may have it for the bringing it forth out of the treasure, John i. 16. The breasts are full, if we would suck of the divine consolations. The armoury is sufficiently furnished for the spiritual warfare, if we could bring forth the weapons. The promises which the believer is interested in, are the channel of conveyance of supply; but alas! faith is often wanting, which should draw it in through these means of conveyance. If we could believe, all things would be possible.

Use II. Of exhortation, both to sinners and saints. And,

*First*, To sinners. Labour ye above all things to get an interest in Christ. O that I could engage you to this pursuit! Truly this is and ought to be made by you the great business of your life, the great interest ye are to pursue, John vi. 29. Ye are all pursuing some one interest or other; and carnal worldly interest is what has the greatest number of followers. I would exhort you to labour to secure an interest in Christ. To press this, consider,

Motive 1. An interest in Christ is the most worthy interest ye can

pursue. And I would commend it to you as such, as deserving your highest esteem and regard, as far excelling all the low and secular interests that can possibly engage your attention. It is the one thing needful, in comparison of which all other pursuits are arrant trifles.

Motive 2. It is an interest that ye may now obtain. Christ is willing to be yours, and to confer upon you his whole fulness, all the riches of his grace and glory. "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." "To-day, if ye will hear the voice of Christ speaking in the gospel, harden not your hearts." Christ now calls you to come to him, that ye may have an interest in him. O then for the Lord's sake, and your own souls' sake, delay not to come to him, that ye may have life, and obtain favour of the Lord.

*Secondly*, To saints. Labour ye to improve your interest in Christ, by bringing in to yourselves daily out of that treasure for whatsoever ye need. The treasure is opened to you, ye are allowed free access to it; improve your privilege by bringing forth out of it suitable supply for all your wants.

Quest. But how is that to be done? what way can one bring forth supply out of the treasure of favour? *Ans.* By faith. Faith is the key of the treasure-door that opens it, the feet that carry into it, the hand of the soul that takes up the necessary supply, and brings it away, Heb. xi. Hence the believer is said to "live by faith," Gal ii. 20, it being that which by its communication with Christ maintains the spiritual life, and is the great provider for all graces. Now, to manage this work successfully,

1. Ye must lay all your wants upon him. That moment that Christ and a soul meet in the everlasting covenant, the soul embracing him in the gospel-offer, he says to the soul, as Judg. xix. 20, "Peace be with thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me." Whatever ye want for soul or body, duty or danger, time or eternity, let it all lie on me. And this is agreeable to the marriage covenant, wherein the provision lies upon the husband, 1 Pet. v. 7. Now faith is to say, "Be it so; from henceforth all my wants be on my Lord." And this implies two things.

(1.) Renouncing of self-provision, or living on one's own stock and purchase; Matth. xvi. 24, "If any man will come after me let him deny himself." Faith empties a soul of itself; it is a man's going out of himself to Jesus Christ for all. While the provision brought from Egypt lasted, the manna fell not; and while men are busy bringing forth of their own store for their needs, the treasure in heaven is locked upon them; but it is opened to the self-emptied be-

liever; Luke i. 53, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away."

(2.) Trusting him for the supply of all your wants, betaking yourselves to him to live wholly by him. Ye must be like a poor man, who can do nothing for himself, being utterly unable to work and win any thing, that casts himself on his rich friend for all he needs, Psal. lv. 22, 1 Pet. v. 7, it is a pithy description of faith which we have; Ruth ii. 12, "The Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust;" for the believer is like a silly chicken unable to preserve itself from the bird of prey, getting in under the wings of the dam for protection.

2. Ye must lay your wants before him, table your complaints, and present your petitions unto him, upon whom all your wants are laid, Matth. xxi. 22. Thus Paul did again and again, and brought forth plentifully out of the treasure, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. What God has a mind to give, he will yet have his people to seek. And this imports,

(1.) A free unfolding of your case to him, as to your best friend, able and willing to help, Eph. iii. 12. Faith makes the believer pour out his heart to the Lord, Psalm lxii. 8. Ye must unfold it freely, fully, without reserve; for to do otherwise would argue distrust. Many a time the believer's heart is full of griefs, sorrows and anxieties; but the best ease a pained heart can get, is pouring out itself in the bosom of a God in Christ, Cant. vii. 11.

(2.) A resignation of the matter into the hands of the Lord, Psalm xxxvii. 5. He is infinitely wise, and the care of the household of heaven is devolved upon him by his Father, John v. 22. He is to judge what wants are really fit to be supplied to every one, what measures of supply they must have, at what time the supply is to be communicated, and in what manner. And it is the work of faith to leave all these upon him, and rest satisfied in his wise disposal.

3. Ye must believe the promises relative to the supply of your needs; Matth. xxi. 22, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." God will have his people deal with him in the way of trusting of his word of promise. And the more firm trust we have in his word, the more abundantly do we receive of his fulness. They are the breasts of the divine consolations, and faith sucks the sap of them, by believing them; Psalm xxviii. 7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped."

(1.) Ye must believe them as a sure word, that shall certainly be made out, Psalm cxix. 160. The unbelieving world take the pro-

mises but for fair words, which they will not trust to; but do thou take them for sure words, big with mercy and favour, which shall not miscarry, but certainly bring forth at the set time, Psalm xii. 6.

(2.) Ye must believe them with a faith of particular application, not only that they shall be made out to others, but that they shall be made out to you, Mark xi. 24; James i. 6, 7. What canst thou be the better of a salve not applied to thy sore, or of a promise not applied to thy soul? The devils may believe that the promises shall be accomplished, but they cannot believe they shall be accomplished to them. In our national covenant we abjure the Pope's general and doubtsome faith. But alas! the applicatory and appropriating act of faith, whereby one appropriates Christ and his benefits to one's self, is much fallen out of our divinity now-a-days, and is in hazard of being extruded, that it may not enter again. The promises are God's blank bills and bonds; if ye do not by faith fill up your own name in them, what will they avail you?" But fill it up by faith, and come forward with them in your hand, saying with David, Psalm cxix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

4. *Lastly.* Wait and hang on about the Lord's hand confidently, till the supply come, using the means of God's appointment for it, Isa. xl. *ult.*; Psalm xxvii. *ult.* Faith and the use of means do sweetly agree, so that they be means of God's appointment, Psalm xxxvii. 3. And they must not be separated. To use means without dependence on the Lord for the success, is atheism; to pretend to believe, and neglect the means of God's institution, is presumption. But be you in the use of means, and wait on him with confident expectation, that what is good the Lord will give. This is it which in the Old Testament is celebrated under the name of trusting, relying, and staying on the Lord. Trust reposed in a generous man, is a strong tie on him to answer expectation, Gen. xix. 8. And they who trust in the Lord shall never be ashamed.

Thus I have shewn you, how you may bring forth out of God's treasure of favour. O ye Christians who have interest in Christ, let this be your daily work; apply to the treasure. For motives, consider,

1. It is a high privilege that it is open to you, and ye have access to it, and will you not improve it? If ye consider that it is shut on the most part of the world, that it was opened to you by the blood of the Son of God, by the operation of the Spirit of God upon you, bringing you to embrace the everlasting covenant, ye will prize that access, and improve it. Had one ready access allowed them to their prince's favour, would they slight it? No surely.

2. This is the Christian life, by which true believers are distinguished from hypocrites, even the life of faith, Gal. ii. 20. And what is that but the daily travelling betwixt their own emptiness and the fulness that is in Jesus Christ? Whereas the hypocrite lives upon his own stock, a stranger to communion with God, and drawing supplies from him in the way of believing. As ever ye would prove yourselves sincere Christians then, take this way.

3. The want of this is the cause that Christians lead such poor lives as they do; Matth. xiii. *ult*, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Many who have cordially embraced Christ in the gospel-offer, spend their time in complaining of their wants, more than applying to the treasure for supply; more in doubting of their interest in Christ, more than in improving it this way; in disputing their right to the treasure of favour in Christ, more than believing. And hence such,

(1.) Unfruitful lives, little progress in holiness, victory over corruption, usefulness for God in their stations, &c., Col. ii. 6, 7. Little faith will always make little holiness; forasmuch as faith purifies the heart, and is the blessed instrument of the soul's communion with God, by which influences from heaven are brought down, without which the soul must needs be in a withered case.

(2.) Uncomfortable lives. God is "the God of consolation," Rom. xv. 5, and the way to obtain it is in the way of believing, ver. 13. The truth is, it is no wonder the Christian, when he looks to himself, be discouraged, and drive heavily, since often he can see nothing there but weakness, darkness, and deadness; but faith looks to Christ, and sees a fulness in him, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" Col. ii. 9, 10.

4. This is a day when Christians have much need to keep up communion with God, and live by faith, Eph. v. 16. It is a day wherein religion is like to die out, and the little of it that is left is in hazard of dwindling away, in principle and practice, into mere morality; it is a day of many temptations and snares, and withdrawing of the Spirit, and wherein judgment seems to be hastening on apace, spiritual and temporal judgments too, for that men have not received the truth in the love thereof, and have walked in darkness while they had the light.

5. *Lastly*. They are most welcome to the Lord, who come with the most holy boldness, and oftenest unto him, for supply out of the treasure; Matth. xv. 28, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Those honour God most, who are most emptied of themselves, and have most business in heaven, for supply

of their wants. It is a pleasure to have full breasts sucked; and there is a fulness in this treasure of favour lodged in Christ. His fulness is not the fulness of a vessel only to serve itself, but of a fountain to be communicated. O then bring forth daily out of it.

## UNBELIEF THE SIN AGAINST CHRIST BY WAY OF EMINENCE, AND THE WRONG DONE TO THE SOUL THEREBY.

PROVERBS viii. 36,

*But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death.*

THE preceding verse gave us the happiness of those who are interested in Christ; this verse gives us the misery of those who reject him. And in it we have two things.

1. A dreadful risk some sinners run; they sin against the wisdom of God, and wrong their own souls. In which consider,

(1.) The dangerous adventure they make: they sin against Christ the Son of God. I told you, that Christ the personal wisdom of God is here meant. I must here inquire what is meant by sinning against him. Christ being true God, every sin men commit is against him, and wrongs their souls too. But it is not every sin that is here meant; it is some sin by way of eminency against the second person of the Trinity; for it is such a one as is constructed to be a hating of him, and loving death, which cannot be said of every sin. You know that the Holy Ghost being true God also every sin is in some sort against him; yet there is a sin against the Holy Ghost so called by way of eminency; so here is a sin against Christ by way of eminency. Now those sins which have their denominations from the several persons of the Trinity, respect them not so much in their essence, as in their office, operation, and work. The Father is Creator, the original lawgiver, the Son Redeemer and Saviour, the Holy Ghost applier of Christ's purchase, Enlightener and Sanctifier. The first sin of Adam in him and us, and the sins of the Pagans still, are the sin against the Father, the transgressing of the law of the Creator. The sin of gospel-despisers is the sin against the Son, as a rejecting of the gospel of Christ. The sin of obstinate and malicious deliberate fighting against God, is the sin against the Holy Ghost, as against the inward working

of the Holy Ghost in them. All the world are by nature under the first, and so liable to wrath; but the Son of God is the anointed Saviour and Redeemer, by whom alone sinners may be recovered, John xiv. 6. He is the ordinance of God for sinners' salvation. He is the remedy against sin provided by the Father; so the rejecting of this ordinance and remedy is the sin against Christ. That is, in a word, it is the sin opposite to the seeking and finding of Christ, vers. 34, 35, namely, not closing with, but rejecting Christ offered in the Gospel, called the sin of unbelief, John xvi. 8, 9.

(2.) The effect of this dangerous adventure; he wrongeth his own soul. The word properly imports violence, and might be read, "He doth violence to his own soul." So it is rendered, Zeph. iii. 4. He ruins himself, he is a self-destroyer, a self-murderer. The man is lying pining away in his sin; Christ the Physician comes to his bedside, saying, "Sinner, I offer you life and salvation with myself." But he turns away, he will have none of him, he cannot part with his disease. So he wrongs his own soul; he dies of it. But there is more than that in it. The man slights Christ; who loses by it? Not Christ, not his messengers, but the poor unbeliever himself, Prov. ix. 12.

2. The nature of this practice, which shews what a dreadful risk it must needs be. But of that more afterwards.

Two doctrines may be deduced from the words.

Doctrine I. Unbelief, or a sinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is the sin against Christ by way of eminency.

Doct. II. The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul.

I shall illustrate each doctrine in order.

Doct. I. Unbelief, or a sinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is the sin against Christ by way of eminency. That is, if a man designed an affront to the Son of God, if he were in a mind to pierce him to the heart, and put a signal affront on him, this is the way to do it, namely, to slight the offer he makes of himself in the gospel.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what treatment of Christ it is, that is this sinning against him.

II. Confirm the doctrine, shewing you, that unbelief is the sin against Christ; that this treatment of Christ, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on him for salvation, is sinning against him in an eminent manner.

III. Improve the subject, in an address both to saints and sinners.

I. I am to shew what treatment of Christ it is, that is this sinning against him. In the general, it is twofold.

*First*, There is a doctrinal treatment of him, that is this sinning against him. So Deists, Socinians, Arians, Papists, &c., sin against him. I insist not on this further than to warn you, that there is, at this day, in this island, appearing a greater disposition to depart from the faith, than there has been at least these thirty years past. Some in the neighbouring land, not papists, nor prelatists, but dissenters, are undermining the doctrine of the eternal Godhead of Christ; and some in this Church are making woful advances towards obscuring the doctrine of the free grace of God in Christ. All which are the native bitter fruits of the generation's practical slighting of, and sinning against Christ, under the light of the gospel.

*Secondly*, There is a practical treatment of him, that is this sinning against him. And of this kind is,

1. Living ignorant of Christ, and the fundamental truths of the gospel; John i. 10. Grossly ignorant persons are doubtless unbelievers. For how can they believe, who know not what to believe? how can they believe in Christ, who have no knowledge of him? Psalm ix. 10. They are slighters of Christ, who have means of knowledge, and yet know him not; they know him not, because they will not be acquainted with him; Job xxi. 14, "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And thus many proclaim their soul-ruining unbelief, by their slighting of ordinances and means of knowledge, and not profiting under them. Were there a physician in the country-side curing all freely, and if any should never use means to get acquainted with him, would not such persons be slighters of him, to their own ruin.

2. People's living insensible of their absolute need of Christ; Matth. ix. 12. He comes in the gospel, and offers himself with all his salvation to sinners, to every one that hears it. Why does he so, but because they must perish without him, and that they need him? But the most part find no pinching need of him, and therefore never come to him. This is slighting him with a witness; Rev. iii. 17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The law is preached, and their misery without Christ is told them; yet are they never so far convinced as to be pricked to the heart; Acts ii. 37. They have no more ado with him, than a hale and sound person with the physician.

3. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel, the record that God hath given concerning his Son; 1 John v. 10, 11. In the gospel it is testified to us from heaven, That Christ alone is the great ordinance of God for life and salvation to poor sinners; that God hath placed that life in him, and offers it in and with him to them. This is the doctrine of the gospel; but who believes it? Is. liii. 1. Object. Who does not believe it? Answ. Alas; that is the nature of the disease. Men may convince men who are hearers of the gospel of the sin of murder, adultery, &c.; but if the Spirit of God take it not in hand, they will not convince them of unbelief; John xvi. 8, 9. But for your conviction, (which may the Spirit carry home!) I will tell you, the treatment which Christ gets from most men, upon the back of the revelation of that record that God hath given of him to them, is such as that; 1 Sam. x. 24, 27, "And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?—But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him;" and as that, 2 Kings v. 10—12, "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana, and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage." Of this treatment of Christ take these two evidences.

Evid. 1. Their not seeking after him with the utmost diligence, till they find him. Compare Prov. viii. 34, 36, "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.—But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." Paul believed the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and therefore pressed forward, Phil. iii. 14. If you were desperately wounded, and one told you of an infallible cure that one had, and which you might get; if after this notice given you, you did not with your utmost might and most laborious endeavours seek after it, would not all the world conclude you did not believe there was such a remedy to be got by you? But your souls are thus wounded, and we tell you day by day, that there is an infallible remedy for them in Christ; and yet ye do not diligently seek after him till ye find him. May we not then say, with the prophet, "Who hath believed our report?" Isa. liii. 1.

Evid. 2. Their seeking life and salvation another way. So do all unbelievers, who give not up themselves to utter despair. They leave the King's highway, John xiv. 6, and betake themselves every one to his own way, Isa. liii. 6. God says of Christ, "This is the way, walk ye in it." But they will not venture on it, but take another way, by which they turn their backs on Christ, and so sin against him.

(1.) The way of the law or covenant of works, namely, by doing to seek life, Rom. ix. 32. This is the way that all men naturally betake themselves to, and that every man abides in, till the grace of God bring him to Jesus Christ. The natural bias of the heart to it I have shewn elsewhere, together with the enmity of the heart against Jesus Christ.* It is little they do; but it is according to their doing, not according to their interest in the blood of Christ, that they expect to find favour with God. This speaks unbelief, and slighting of Christ with a witness; "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. *ult.*

(2.) The way of uncovenanted mercy. They pretend to do what they can; and where they come short, they expect that God will be merciful to them and forgive them; while in the meantime they do not consider that they can only find mercy being in Christ. Thus they do at least mix their own righteousness with Christ's, if they have any regard to Christ at all, Gal. iii. 12.

4. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel upon the authority of a divine testimony, but on some low account. As to many pretending to believe in Christ, we may see the quite contrary in them to that, 1 Thess. ii. 13,—"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God." What belief they have of it, they owe to their education, not to regeneration; to the teaching of men, not to the teaching of the Spirit. What makes some Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, Papists, in foreign countries, namely, that it is the religion they were brought up in, that is even the thing which makes them Christians in our country. O Sirs, that is not faith in Christ, but real unbelief of him, and slighting of him, as receiving his doctrine not upon his own authority, and the testimony of the Spirit, but of man, John v. 34. If ever ye come to honour Christ by believing, your faith will be built on another foundation; John iv. 42, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

* See "Fourfold State," state 2, head 1, under the title, "Of the corruption of man's nature."

5. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel with a particular application to their own case, or to themselves. Here is the trial of a convinced sinner. Christ said, Mark xvi. 15, 16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Hereupon the apostle says to the jailor at Philippi, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," Acts xvi. 31. And every minister of Christ may say so to every man, and God says it to every one to whom his word comes. So that although we do believe that Christ is able and willing to save all his elect, yet if I do not believe that he is able and willing to save ME, and that he offers himself to ME, I am still an unbeliever, and do sin against Christ. For,

(1.) The offer is general, and comprehends us all, Isa. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 20. If any of you then believe it as to all others, and not as to yourselves, ye make God a liar, and do not believe his word; because though God says, the offer is to all that hear the gospel, ye contradict it, saying, that the offer belongs not to you, and that Christ is not willing to be yours.

(2.) What benefit can any man have by a general promise or offer of mercy from God or man, which he does not appropriate to himself? A king offers mercy to all the rebels that will take it; one says, "O but it is to all the rest, and not to me, I will not venture out of my lurking-hole." Is not this a belying of the king, and a refusing of mercy, and slighting the offer?

(3.) How is it possible that one can accept, receive, and rest on Christ for salvation, if he make not a particular application of the promise of the gospel, or gospel-offer to himself? The acceptance, &c. must needs be founded on the offer, and can be no larger than the offer is; if I do not believe that God offers to be my God in Christ, I cannot accept him as such. If I do not believe that Christ gives himself to ME in the gospel-offer, I cannot accept, receive, and embrace, nor rest on him.

(4.) Wherein does our faith of the promises of the gospel go beyond the faith of devils, if it proceed not the length of application of them to ourselves? James ii. 19. The devils believe the threatenings of God, and that with application, and they tremble; and that they believe the promises of God too in the general, that they shall be made out, we have no reason to doubt, when we consider, they believe God's faithfulness to his word, and therefore tremble in expectation of what he has threatened. And they know it is the same faithful God who has made the promises, that has made the threatenings. And now that for a course of five thousand years

they have observed the promises still fulfilled in their time, we may be sure that they do expect the rest will be fulfilled too. Wherein then can our faith go beyond theirs, if we believe not the promise or offer of life and salvation to us in particular?

Wherefore in not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, with particular application to ourselves, we sin against Christ, and wrong our own souls. Against this Satan bends his force, and under a vail of humility Christ is affronted by the unbelieving sinner; and indeed it is a mighty thing to believe this, over the belly of seen and felt vileness and unworthiness; but faith will make its way over it all, and honour Christ by believing his word.

6. *Lastly.* Their not taking, accepting, and receiving of Christ in the Gospel-offer, and resting on him, for life and salvation; John i. 11, 12. The royal Bridgroom is slighted, sinned against, and affronted when the offered marriage is neglected, refused, or shifted, or in any ways not coucluded, by the sinful children of Adam; when the bride halts betwixt two opinions, and does not conclude the blessed bargain. And thus sinners sin against Christ,

1*st*, When the sinner will not take Christ, but holds by other lovers, namely, the world and lusts. There are two opposite parties in suit of sinners' hearts, who are hearers of the gospel, Christ on the one hand, lusts on the other. These last have so engaged the hearts of many, that they give Christ the refusal; Jer. li. 25; John v. 40. They see there is no dealing with both; if they take Christ, they must let these go away; and therefore since they cannot otherwise have him, they will not have him. They cannot think of being deprived or abridged of their sinful liberty; so the offer of Christ is made them, but they will not accept it.

2*dly*, When the sinner dare not take Christ, or embrace him in the gospel-offer, fearing that he will never be his, nor give himself to him. This is the snare for the convinced sinner, and as effectually keeps him from Christ, as the love of lusts does the secure; Jer. ii. 25. One may see, that the former makes way for the latter. The ground of this is one's sinfulness and unworthiness seen and felt, which makes them think it would be presumption in them to believe. Hence they say, as Luke v. 8. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The hand of Joab is in this. Satan has two glasses to let men see their sins in.

(1.) A lessening glass, which he holds before the eyes of secure sinners, causing their sins appear little. Hence their enormous outbreakings, though habitual, are accounted but infirmities; and lesser sins, which the world makes no bones of, are accounted no sins at all.

(2.) A magnifying glass, which he holds before the eyes of the convinced sinner. And one may know that he is looking on his sinful self in Satan's glass, when he sees his own sinfulness so as he cannot see God's mercy, the virtue of Christ's blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit, above his sinfulness; when the sight of the disease sets him farther from the Physician, and makes him stand off from Christ, instead of running to him; when instead of quickening him to embrace the remedy, it causes his heart to faint so as he cannot put forth his hand to apply the offered cure.

That this is from Satan, is manifest, in that it is directly contrary, (1.) To the true use of the law in subserviency to the gospel; Gal. iii. 24. The law discovers sin, and the soul's misery by it; but then the design of that to the hearers of the gospel is, that they may be made to prize and run unto Christ. (2.) To the ample declarations of love and mercy made in the gospel, which shew that there is no case whatsoever so bad but Christ is both able and willing to take it in hand; Isa. i. 18, and lv. 1; Rev. iii. 20, and xxii. 17.

3*dly*, When the sinner dare not venture on Christ alone for salvation, but to strengthen that bottom, goes about to render himself acceptable to God by his own obedience, Gal. v. 4. The covenant of works is so engrained in our natures, and so ignorant are we naturally of the mystery of Christ, and the way of imputed righteousness; that till the Spirit of the Lord savingly enlighten one in the knowledge of Christ, he will have but low thoughts of an imputed righteousness as an insecure way, and will therefore go about to strengthen it by the addition of his own works; though it is but attempting to mix clay with iron, that will not do. But the Spirit of the Lord, in the day of power, will carry men quite off their own bottom.

4*thly*, When the sinner does not take him for all the ends for which he is appointed of the Father for sinners, and in all his offices, but divides them, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is given to us for all in the gospel-offer, for salvation from sin as well as from wrath, to be our Prophet to teach us, our Priest to save us, and our King to govern us. When therefore the sinner does not take him for sanctification as well as justification, he is not received at all indeed, but sinned against, and rejected as the ordinance for sanctifying of sinners.

*Lastly*, When the sinner does not believe, that he shall have life and salvation by Jesus Christ. True faith may be accompanied with many doubtings; sometimes one may be ready to say, "My hope is perished from the Lord;" but it is plain that where there is no such persuasion in greater or lesser measure at any time, there is no faith.

II. I proceed to confirm the doctrine, shewing you, that unbelief is the sin against Christ; that this treatment of Christ, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is sinning against him in an eminent manner. This will appear from some general considerations, and from a view of some particular pieces of malignity against Christ wrapt up in unbelief.

*First*, It appears from some general considerations.

1. Faith in Christ is an honouring of him in a special manner, John v. 23, 24; therefore unbelief must be a special dishonour done to him. Faith gives glory to the object of it, Rom. iv. 20; unbelief then robs him of that glory, and casts reproach on him. Faith puts the crown on Christ's head, Cant. iii. *ult.*, unbelief pulls it off and tramples it under foot. See then how good, necessary, and pleasing to Christ believing in him is; how bad, noxious, and abominable to him unbelief must be.

2. Unbelief is the great Antichrist in the heart, setting up there in downright opposition to the Son of God. The end of Christ's coming was to destroy sin, 1 John iii. 8, the effect of unbelief is to preserve sin in life and vigour. It is the soul and life of all other sins, the shield that keeps their heads and hearts hale; take it away, they all die, and the soul revives; leave it upon their head, and they all live, and the soul dies, John viii. 24. It is the general of the army of hell in men's breasts, against whom the word is given in the day of power, "Fight neither with small nor great," but with unbelief, the king of sins, John xvi. 8, 9.

3. It is a sin that so engrosses the whole soul to itself against Christ, that it leaves him nothing to take part with him against it. If a man sin against Christ by oppression, murder, &c. his judgment, reason, natural conscience, will in greater or lesser measure plead the Lord's cause against him, and will prepare the way for the Spirit's conviction. But as for unbelief, there is no help from them against it. The mystery of Christ lies beyond the ken of mere reason, 1 Cor. ii. 14, how then can the blackness of the sin of unbelief be discerned thereby, or the natural conscience check for it? Nay, mere reason, in its corrupt state, sides against Christ with unbelief, in as far as the best way it knows, is the way of the law or covenant of works. So that on this occasion, Meroz's curse may light on all the faculties of the soul, "because they come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty," Judg. v. 23.

4. It is the sin that ruins the hearers of the gospel, with whom Christ has to do; John iii. 18, 19, "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the

only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The poor pagans who have not heard of Christ, sin not against him in this sort, John xv. 22. Whatever sins the hearers of the gospel may have been chargeable with, if they will believe in Christ, they shall never be charged on them; upon this point of believing, or not believing, turns their salvation, or damnation, Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore since it is the ruining sin, it must needs be the great ruining sin against Christ.

5. It is equal to the grossest sins against the light of nature. The Pharisee could say, I am not unjust, an extortioner, an adulterer; the publican durst not say so. But the one rejected the propitiation, which the other embraced, Luke xviii. 13, and so was accepted of God, while the other was rejected. You will bless God ye are honest, sober men and women, no adulterers, murderers, &c.; but ye do not see the bloody sin of unbelief, which is as ill as any of them; Isa. lxvi. 3, "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man;" *i. e.* An unbeliever is as a murderer in God's sight. Faith was the great duty under the Old Testament as well as under the New, ver. 2. And those Jews who put their sacrifices of oxen, lambs, and their incense, in the Messiah's stead, by unbelief were as murderers, &c.

6. It is above these sins in odiousness and heinousness; Heb. x. 28, 29, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God," &c.? There was a consultation of the Trinity concerning the making of man, and the result was, his creation after God's image. How great must those sins be, which, breaking the laws of his creation, do signally deface that image? There was also a consultation of the Trinity concerning man's restoration, and the result was, the Son of God giving himself to the death for their recovery. How much greater then must the sin of unbelief be, which of its own nature tends to make the whole contrivance vain? The Sodomites were great sinners, and the Capernaumites unbelievers; which were the greatest sinners? The greatest punishment by a just Judge speaks the greatest sin; and so the Capernaumite unbelievers were the greatest sinners, Matth. xi. 23, 24.

7. It has none that goes beyond it but the sin against the Holy Ghost; and even it is unbelief carried to its utmost height, Heb. x. 29. Unbelief strikes against the Father and the Son, casting dishonour on both, John v. 23. If to this be added a doing despite to the Spirit of God, the sinner is at his utmost pitch of wickedness. And none are capable of the latter, but he that is guilty of the former.

8. *Lastly*, It is a sin directly striking against the glorious office wherewith Christ is invested, and while he is in the actual exercise of that office, John viii. 49. The Father minding to recover the glory of his wronged attributes, and lost sinners of the race of Adam, invested his own Son in the mediatory office, that he should build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory. The Son comes in this his noble office, with his Father's commission, to prosecute it for these noble ends: and unbelief rejects him as such, and casts dishonour on him, Luke xix. 14. To do a personal injury to a king is a crime, but to do an injury striking against his kingly character and office, and that while he is in the administration of his royal office, is a crime of a far deeper die, than any merely personal injury done him. So the case is here.

*Secondly*, That unbelief is the sin against Christ by way of eminency, appears from a view of some particular pieces of malignity against him wrapt up therein.

1. It is a despising him as the Father's choice. The voice of the gospel is, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. iii. *ult.* The unbeliever answers, "We will not have this man to reign over us," Luke xix. 14. When man fell, God looked on the whole creation, and there was none found able to help him; so he made choice of his own Son, that the breach might be under his hand, Psalm lxxxix. 19. This comes to be proclaimed in the gospel, and as Samuel said to all the people, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" 1 Sam. x. 24; it says, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29. But unbelief says, as 1 Sam. x. 27, "How shall this man save us? and they despise him." So unbelievers pour contempt on the choice. Ask the unbelieving Jews if they approve the choice? No; they say, It is a stumbling-block; ask the unbelieving Gentiles, if they approve it, No, it is foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. Therefore do others as they will, they will not lay their weight on that bottom. Only believers cry, Grace, grace to the choice! a noble choice! "Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God," ver. 24; compare Matth. xi. 6.

2. It is a trampling upon his love in undertaking the mediatory office. Man having sinned, justice demands satisfaction; the poor bankrupts cannot discharge the debt themselves, angels found themselves too weak to bear such a burden, sacrifice and offering cannot be accepted as a compensation for the wrong done to a holy God. The proposal is made to the Son, and respect to his Father's glory, and unhired love to sinners, makes him accept and strike hands; "Lo, I come," &c., Psalm xl. 6, 7. And after all, unbelief says in

effect, he might have let it alone; the unbeliever is not for life and salvation that way. Christ's Father is content, he is so, but the unbeliever is not, Psalm lxxxi. 11. How great must the sin of trampling on such love be?

3. It is a treating of him as a liar and an impostor. The language of every unbeliver is that; John vii. 12, "He deceiveth the people." Christ's name is the word of God, by whom the mind of God touching the salvation of sinners is manifested to the world; he is by office interpreter of the Father's mind, the great prophet and teacher. He came from the Father's bosom, and reveals the way of salvation in the doctrine of the gospel. What is it not to believe him then, but to make him a liar? 1 John v. 10. And since the revelation made by him is upon such a weighty matter, the not believing it must needs infer the looking on him as an impostor. What then shall be given to that false heart, that thus sins against Christ? "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper," Psalm cxx. 4.

4. It is a contempt poured on his precious blood, and the whole course of his obedience and sufferings. The believer by faith gets in under that blood, Heb. xii. 24; but unbelief treads on it, chap. x. 29. This performance of the Son was looked upon as a sufficient mean to retrieve the Father's glory, and recover the sinner that was sunk lowest in sin and misery, Psalm lxxxix. 19. As such it is proposed to sinners in the gospel; but they will not receive it. And if ye consider all the sets of unbelievers, the bold contemners that go on in their sins, and hope for mercy; the legal professors that lay the stress on their own duties; the trembling unbeliever, that dare not come to Christ; the desperate sinner, that says there is no hope; they will all be found agreeing in maintaining low unworthy thoughts of the glorious ransom paid by Christ, and offered to them. The first say, All that was needless, God is merciful; the second, It is too weak a bottom to trust all to; the third, It may bear the weight of many, but it is too weak for theirs; the fourth, It can do nothing for them.

5. It is a frustrating of the ends of the death of Christ, as far as lies in the unbeliever's power. He had a long, sore, and helpless travail of soul; he endured it in hopes of a glorious issue; Isa. liii. 11; Heb. xii. 2. But did all treat him as the unbelieving part of the world does, the issue would be but as it were bringing forth wind. At the expense of the blood of the Son of God, a medicine is prepared for perishing souls; but the unbeliever will not apply it, when it is brought to his hand; a feast is prepared, but the unbeliever will not eat of it, but says in effect, "To what purpose is this waste?"

6. *Lastly.* It is a declining of his government, and subjection to him, most reproachfully; Luke xix. 14. We see most of the hearers of the gospel at this pass with him; subject themselves to whom they will, they will not subject themselves to him; they stick by other lords. His Father has given him all power in heaven and earth; but they will not come under his power, as long as they can shift otherwise. There are many reasons of this, but there is one that is little observed, namely, unbelief, they cannot trust him. A wise people will not subject themselves willingly to one they cannot trust; Judg. ix. 15, compare Psalm ii. *ult.* They cannot trust him with their welfare, though he is the Father's trustee, the trustee of believers; hence they say, he shall not be their trustee. What wonder then that unbelief be a "piercing of him?" Zech. xii. 10.

From this doctrine we may learn lessons for saints, for sinners, and for all.

*First*, Here is a lesson for saints, or believers.

1. Prize the precious faith which God has given you 2 Pet. i. 1. Have your souls been brought to believe in, accept, and embrace Jesus Christ offered in the gospel, for all his salvation, and so to come off from the course of slighting and sinning against Christ. Do not undervalue it as a small thing, but look to the nature of reigning unbelief, and prize it next to the gift of his precious Son and Spirit. If it were but as a grain of mustard-seed, it is more precious than all the gold of the Indies, more precious than as many faithless works and duties, as would have filled up every minute of your time since ye were born.

2. Wonder at his sparing you till ye were brought the length of believing in him. How deep did your unbelief go against him; what attribute of his did it not cast dirt upon; what was it he did or suffered, but it had an ill tale of? O, why did he put up all these affronts, and still insist on your believing, giving you his word, writ, seal, oath, and whatsoever could have been required of the most faithless man, to cause you believe him, till ye were won to faith in him?

3. Mourn over your remaining unbelief, as the father of the child did, Mark ix. 25, who said with tears, "Lord I believe! help thou mine unbelief." Jealousies of Christ are a disease that runs in the veins of all those of the blood royal of heaven, ay till they get home to their Father's house. How justly may he say, "O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you." Alas! can the saints' experiences of his truth and faithfulness, and the tried word, carry them no further? If there could be any such uneasy passion as shame in heaven, they would blush for their unbelief whenever they got in there.

4. *Lastly*, See what it is that mars the communication betwixt Christ and you, and what makes you lead such a poor life, both in point of sanctification and comfort, Matth. xiii. *ult.*, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Faith purifies the heart, unbelief makes it as the neglected garden, overgrown with weeds. Faith quiets the heart and cheers it, Rom. xv. 13. David's experience of the way of getting help from heaven we have, Psalm xxviii. 7, "My heart trusted in him, and I am helped." Trust reposed in a generous man, able to help, brings him to put to his hand speedily, for the help of the party trusting him. No wonder that unbelief, being of such a nature, mar the communication.

*Secondly*, Here is a lesson for sinners, or unbelievers.

1. Ye are sinners against Christ in an eminent manner. Our text brings you in guilty of affronting the Son of God, sinning against the remedy of sin. Though the language of your lips may be "Hosanna to the Son of David;" the language of your unbelieving hearts is, Crucify him. Ye are guilty of sinning against him at the rate which Pagans, yea and devils, never sinned against him. They broke the law of their Creator; but ye have not only done so, but ye are breaking the law of redeeming love, namely, the law of faith, too.

2. Here is a sin thou hast to be sensible of, and mourn for, which hitherto thou hast little regarded. May be thou hast sometimes been grieved for other sins, and mourned for them. But didst thou ever mourn for this? did ever this give thee a grieved heart? Truly this is the wound to the heart, this is the most dangerous evil, that keeps all the rest from healing. If ye have not been sensible of and affected with it, (1.) Your faith is likely to be but a fancy, the Spirit being promised for that end, John xvi. 8, 9. (2.) Your unbelief would be sure to be strengthened by all your other mourning for sin; and so instead of its bringing you nearer Christ, it would set you farther off from him, Matth. xxi. 31.

3. Here, even here, O sinner, lies your ruin for time and eternity, John viii. 24, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." This is the great soul-murdering sin among gospel-hearers, for it is the sinning against the remedy of sin. Consider, (1.) It makes all your other plague-sores incurable, while it is not removed, John viii. 24. Your pride, passion, worldliness, &c. still run upon you; why, so they will always do, while the bloody issue of unbelief is not stopped. While that remains, they can admit no cure but a palliative one, after which they must needs break out again. For the falling dew shall as soon make its way through the flinty rock, as sanctifying influences shall come into you without union with Christ, which is

marred by unbelief. (2.) At this rate then ye must die in your sins eternally, and your unbelief must be the great cause of your ruin, 2. Thess. i. 8.

4. The condemnation of unbelievers must be most dreadful, since it is the sin against Christ, Matth. xi. 24, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Other sins wound the soul; this resolutely keeps the wounds open, and will not suffer them to be healed. Other sins are against the sovereign authority of God in the law; this superadds thereto a contempt of unparalleled love and mercy opened to the sinner in the gospel. As then the sourest vinegar comes off the most generous wine, so the most fearful thunder-claps of wrath will break out on the sinner, from the contempt of a throne of grace through unbelief.

5. *Lastly*, Here is what may strike the bottom out of all your objections against your believing in Christ, fetch them from what quarter ye will, and dress them up in what form you please, whether the conclusion be, you may not, dare not, or ought not believe on Christ. As it is the commandment "That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23, so not believing is the sin against Christ. Account ye of it as ye will, he will reckon it the greatest affront that ye can do him, and he will reckon with you for it as such. Wherefore let this short answer serve in the case.

*Thirdly*, Here is a lesson for all. It concerns us all to be convinced of the malignity against Christ and his Father that is in the sin of unbelief, to get above it, as we would throw coals of hell-fire out of our bosom; to believe in Christ, embrace him as our Saviour and Redeemer, Head and Husband, and to live by faith on him. This is the way to honour the Son, the true way to be holy here, and happy hereafter.

Doctrine II. The unbeliever sinner against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul.

Here I shall shew, how the unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul; and then deduce an inference or two for application.

I. I am to shew how the unbeliever, sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul. The wrong here meant is real hurt or damage, arising from this woful practice. Now, on whom does it fall? On the sinner himself. I take it up in these two, that he wrongs his own soul really and only.

*First*, The unbeliever, sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul really. He does in very deed do hurt and bring

damage to himself, not to his body only, but to his soul, the more precious part. He does violence to himself, he treats his own soul cruelly and unjustly. He carries against his own soul as an enemy, doing it real mischief. For by unbelief,

1*st*, A man keeps his soul in a state of separation and alienation from God. The sinner by nature is far from God, without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, John xiv. 6, and unbelief keeps the soul from off that way, fixes the separation wall, that as long as it remains in its power, the sinner can never meet with God, as rejecting the only meeting place.

2*dly*, A man keeps his soul under the guilt of all his sins. The blood of Jesus purgeth from all sin; but it must be sprinkled by faith on the soul, which unbelief refuseth, John viii. 24. It keeps the soul out of Christ; and while it is so, all the guilt remains, the yoke of his transgressions is wreathed about his neck, and all the cords of death abide about him in their force. No mourning or sorrow, tears or repentance will loose them; only the blood of Christ procures pardon.

3*dly*, A man keeps his soul in a state of utter inability to do any thing that is good or acceptable in the sight of God; Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith it is impossible to please him." It keeps the reigning power of sin hale in the soul, and so preserves and feeds the several lusts, the devourers of the soul. It binds up hand and foot that he can do nothing, nor move a step heavenward, John xv. 5. For it blocks up all saving communication between heaven and the soul.

4*thly*, It fixes the soul in a state of condemnation; John iii. 18, "He that believeth not is condemned already." It keeps it under the curse of the first covenant, and exposes it to eternal destruction. It keeps it naked without a righteousness, destitute of any valid plea for eternal life. It leaves it without the city of refuge, every moment in hazard of being cut off by the avenger of blood.

*Lastly*, By refusing the remedy, the unbeliever brings double ruin on his own soul. The soul might be saved; but by unbelief salvation is refused, and so the soul is in worse case than if Christ had never been offered to it.

*Secondly*, The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul only, not Christ whom he sins against; Prov. ix. 12, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." All sin is against the mind and honour of Christ, but no sin is against his happiness. If all the creatures did conspire against him, it could not make the least diminution of his happiness, or in the least disturb him. Thy un-

belief is like one's rushing his head against a rock, which can only hurt the person himself; Job xxxv. 6, "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him?

I shall conclude this subject with some inferences.

1. All unbelievers, rejecters of Christ, are self-murderers; they ruin their own souls, Ezek. xviii. 31. When it comes to pass that thy soul perishes, and inquiry is made, by whose hands it has fallen, there will be a decision; Hos. xiii. 9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" not Adam, not Satan, but thou thyself, O sinner.

2. Ye cannot do your souls a worse turn than not to receive Christ by faith. Many an ill turn ye have done them by swearing, lying, covetousness, &c., but this is a stab to the heart; this is wounding the soul in the most sensible, in the most noble part.

3. All unbelievers will be inexcusable. Pagans will have something to say, that the revelation of the way of salvation through Christ was not made to them; yea devils will have it to say, that there was no remedy prepared for them. But what wilt thou have to say for thyself, O unbeliever, who treadest under foot the blood of the Redeemer! Thou wilt be wholly without excuse. Thou wilt be like the man that sat down at the table, at the marriage of the king's son, without a wedding-garment, who when asked, how he came there not having a wedding-garment, was speechless, having no excuse to allege for his presumptuous behaviour.

4. Believe in, accept of, embrace, and close with Christ, as ye would not ruin your own souls. Refuse not the remedy that is freely provided for you in Christ. Ye are all invited and welcome to come unto Christ for salvation from sin, and from the wrath that is to come. By accepting of Christ ye shall be saved, and your souls shall have communion with God. But if ye believe not, you shall perish, and the wrath of God shall lie on you for ever. "He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16.

5. *Lastly*, Saints and believers, in as far as ye admit unbelief, ye wrong your own souls. Every act of unbelief is a doing violence to your souls, and hurting them in their most essential interests. O then guard against this dreadful and deceitful enemy, that seeks your ruin. Daily exercise faith in Christ, improve it by vigorous and repeated exercise; and continually cry unto the Lord, saying, "Lord increase our faith." Live by faith, walk by faith, and, in the strength of Christ, resist all the assaults of unbelief; and in due time ye shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you. Always bear in mind, and never forget, that "he that sinneth

against Christ, wrongeth his own soul," and is in love with death; whereas he that honoureth him by believing in his name, and is strong in the faith, giving glory to God, shall be safe amidst all the troubles and trials of this world, in every period and stage of life, and shall at last be received into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where happiness for ever dwells, and the voice of violence and wrong is never heard.

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## BELIEVERS A MYSTERY, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THEIR TRAVELS FROM THE WILDERNESS OF THIS WORLD, TO THE HEAVENLY CANAAN, LEANING UPON CHRIST.*

SONG viii. 5,

*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?*

WE have been solemnising our souls' espousals to Jesus Christ, and our consent to the gospel-call, saying in effect to us, "Wilt thou go with this man?" Leave thy father's house, and thine own people, and cleave to the King of Zion. We have before angels and men answered, We will go with him, for he is our Beloved. Here we have an account of the Christian life, which must be our life, if we will deal honestly with him; it is a "coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on our Beloved." These are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, containing,

1. An inquiry about a party, whom they took particular notice of, namely, the church of believers, the spouse of Christ; "Who is this?" It intimates a kind of surprise, Who's that! The wilderness uses not to afford such a sight as this. It imports an admiration as of some hidden thing, a mystery; Who is this? This is a strange kind of personage whom we see.

2. A character of the party inquired about. It is a woman, one of the weak sex, as the church of believers is represented in scripture. She is not one of the dwellers in the wilderness. She appears not to have built her house there. She is but a traveller through it, and her head is awayward from it; and she is set for another country. That is she whom we mean, who is coming up from the wilderness. I make no question but by the wilderness here is meant

* The substance of several sermons preached at Ettrick, June 18, 1721, and subsequent Sabbaths.

the world, as Cant. iii. 6; and iv. 8; with a plain eye to the Israelites coming through the wilderness to Canaan; the last of which, as it was typical of heaven, so the former is of the world.

But for the further understanding of these words, it is necessary to take notice of a custom among the Jews at their marriages, to which there is here a manifest allusion, viz., The bridegroom used to take his bride, and carry her out of the city into the fields, and there they had their nuptial-songs; and afterward he brought her back again, leaning on him, into the city, to his father's house, and there the marriage was solemnized. Now we may be sure, however, that these fields were not a wilderness or moorlands, no fit place for a bridegroom and bride's walk together. This, then, increases the wonder, What a bride is this that is coming up out of the wilderness with her Bridegroom, leaning on him? Others use to be entertained more softly and delicately; what a bride and Bridegroom are these! However, here is represented the Christian life, the life of the church of believers espoused to Christ. In which observe two things.

1*st*, Her exercise; she is travelling upon her road away with her espoused husband, namely, Christ. The place she is going from is the wilderness-world; the place she is going to appears, from what is said, to be her Bridegroom's Father's house. Her way is upward, her motion an ascending, as the word imports; and here should rather be read "going up," than "coming up," as Judg. xx. 21, since the decency of the parable requires it, she being rather going from the place where the daughters of Jerusalem were, than to the place where they were.

2*dly*, Her posture, her travelling posture; "leaning on her Beloved." This is what in New Testament language is called the life of faith; for that is the spiritual leaning of the soul, and imports a fiducial persuasion. It bears, (1.) Her having her Bridegroom's company through the wilderness. He leaves her not there alone; he bids her go nowhere but where he himself will go with her. (2.) Her having his help through the wilderness. She leans on him, as a weak woman on a journey leans upon her husband.

Three doctrines offer themselves from the words.

Doct. I. True believers, espoused to Christ, turning their back on the world, and walking heavenward with him, are a mystery, a strange sight in the world. Who is this!

Doct. II. The life of believers, as espoused to Christ, is a going up from the wilderness of this world, with him, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan.

Doct. III. The way to get up from the wilderness-world to the heavenly Canaan, is to go all along leaning on Jesus Christ by faith.

I shall illustrate and apply the first two of these doctrines distinctly, and consider the third in a word of direction in the application of the second.

Doct. I. True believers, espoused to Christ, turning their back on the world, and walking heavenward with him, are a mystery, a strange sight in the world. Who is this!

In discoursing this subject I shall,

I. Premise some things for right understanding the doctrine.

II. Shew in what respects believers are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.

III. Give the reasons of the point.

IV. Apply.

I. I shall premise some things for right understanding the doctrine.

1. Sin turned this world into an enemy's country in respect of heaven, and so into a wilderness. It was originally the seat of the friend of God, the confederate of heaven, innocent Adam; and then it was a pleasant land. But sin entering, it changed masters, so that the devil is become the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4, and it a wilderness because the primitive communication betwixt heaven and it is stopped, and a new one settled betwixt hell and this world.

2. All men by their first birth are natives of this world; their father's house is in it, the people of it are the people that are theirs, Psalm xlv. 10. And home is home, be it never so homely; they love the wilderness, they desire not to change, they know no better country, and they seek none better. They are pleased with the place, the company, and the manner of living; for they are all natural to them.

3. The Lord from eternity having set his love upon some of the natives, in due time comes in the gospel into the wilderness-world, and making love to them, gains their consent, and is espoused to them in the everlasting marriage-covenant, according to Hos. ii. 19, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." Isa. xliv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's." Thus he becomes theirs, and they his, and they are engaged to follow him whithersoever he goes. Not only are they obliged by their contract of espousals to go with him, but their hearts are so set upon him, that they cannot think of parting with him again, or staying behind him.

4. Though the espousals and the feasts of espousals are held in the wilderness, yet the place set for the consummating of the marriage is Christ's Father's house in Cannan above, to which he begins immediately to carry his bride. She must no longer be a residenter in the world, a dweller in the wilderness, but must lift her heart and affections off her own people, and her father's house, and be going away homeward to Christ's Father's house, that the marriage may be consummated.

5. This her going away up from the wilderness with her espoused Husband, is a going away in heart and affections; it is the soul's motion heavenwards in this life, the last step of which is made at death. It is a gracious frame of heart shining forth in a holy, tender, and heavenly walk. Every step in the way of holiness, in mortification, vivification, and contempt of the world, is a step homeward to Christ's Father's house.

6. *Lastly.* Christ's bride at her waygoing, and ongoing with him thus, is a mystery, a strange sight in the world. Her own country-people gaze at her, to see her undertaking such a strange journey, turning her back on the beloved world, and setting out for a strange country. Sometimes believers fall out of the exercise of grace, become untender in their walk, and grow so like the world, that they do not appear to be going up out of the wilderness, but rather pitching their tents there. But when they are in the exercise of grace, holy and heavenly in their walk, then do the spectators make the question, "Who is this?" Like the Jewish rulers, who "seeing the boldness of Peter and John, and perceiving that they were ignorant and unlearned men, marvelled, and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus;" Acts iv. 13.

II. I shall show in what respects believers are a mystery, a strange sight in the world; the power of godliness appearing in their walk at this rate, so that it is said of them, "Who is this?"

1. There is something very amiable about them, as we are told of the primitive Christians; Acts ii. 46, 47, that "they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." There is a conscience within worldly men, as well as corruption; and what their corruptions will condemn, their conscience will approve as lovely; 2 Cor. iv. 2. Men's corruptions may get the management of their tongue, hands, and their whole external behaviour, and may set the man to run down piety, and the party in whom it appears; yet in the meantime conscience within their breasts will be applauding and admiring the godly man, as one who has something very lovely

about him, as Balaam did in the case of the Israelites; Numb. xxiii. 9, 10.

2. There is something very awful about them to beholders. Paul stands at the bar and reasons, and Felix sitting on the bench trembles; Acts xxiv. 25. John Baptist lies in his grave beheaded at Herod's command, and yet there he is a terror to Herod; Matth. xiv. 1, 2. The remains of God's image on man in point of dominion, has an awe and majesty with it, that affects the brutes; Gen. ix. 2. How much more has the restored image of God in righteousness and holiness shining forth in a Christian's life, a majesty with it, procuring an internal reverence to them from beholders! They are to them like men of another world, and every view they take of such writes death to them; Heb. xi. 7.

3. There is something very mysterious about them; Zech. iii. 8. They are like foreigners in a country, apt to become a gazing-stock, a wonder, about which the natives cannot satisfy themselves. A believer marching heavenward, away from this wilderness-world, is,

(1) A mystery to the men of the world, whether professors or profane. They cannot comprehend them, for they are God's "hidden ones;" Psalm lxxxiii. 3, not hid from their bodily eyes; ver. 4, but from the eyes of their minds. What a mystery is that man to them, who sets his feet and treads on that, which they set their hearts on and adore? who values, pursues eagerly, and by no means can be brought to part with, that which they can see no beauty in? whose principles, aims, and actions are diametrically opposite to those of theirs? They are to them like men of another mould and make, which they cannot understand. Nay, they are,

(2.) A mystery to themselves, ay, so great many times, that they know not what to make of themselves, what class to rank themselves in, whether of saints or sinners; Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. A true Christian is indeed a bundle of mysteries; he on earth, and his head in heaven, yet really and truly united! John xv. 5; crucified with Christ, yet living; living, yet not he, but Christ living in him, Gal. ii. 20; not loitering, but labouring, yet not he, but "the grace of God with him;" 1 Cor. xv. 10. He is a man of two leading contrary principles, having a will and not a will to one and the same thing; he sins, and yet it is not he; Rom. vii. 17. He has many spots and stains on him, yet is all fair; Cant. iv. 7; "black, yet comely, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon;" chap. i. 5; wanting many things, yet complete; Col. ii. 10. What wonder that such a one should be in way of admiration inquired about, "Who is this?"

III. I shall give the reasons of the point, That true believers are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.

1. Because they are so unlike the world, they are like speckled birds among the rest, 1 Pet. iv. 4. They are cast into the new mould of regeneration, and are come forth nonconformists to the world, Rom. xii. 2. They have got another spirit, than the spirit which all their people and their father's house are acted by, which casts their whole conversation into quite another shape than theirs, Num. xiv. 24. So the unlikeness betwixt them makes them a strange sight.

2. Because they are so unlike themselves in former times. Saul among the prophets was a strange sight, 1 Sam. x. 11. But the grace of God makes a more wonderful change in a man from what he was before, as appears in Saul among the apostles, 1 Tim. i. 12, 13. What an observable change was there, that he which persecuted the saints in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed! Gal. i. 23. Grace makes lambs of lions, casts out the dumb devil, that they who cared not for praying, preaching, &c. but all these things were a burden to them, they cannot for the world live without them. It makes a new heart, a new life, a new man, all things new, 2 Cor. v. 17.

3. Because they are very rare in the world; they are but here and there one for a marvel, Jer. iii. 14. The multitude in the world prefer the wilderness to Zion, and sit still in their native land, and will not go away with Christ. They have the gospel-call, they are courted to match with Christ; but they think gospel-invitations but idle tales, and they have beloveds of their own in the wilderness, which they will not part with for him. Some say with the mouth they will take him, and subscribe with the hand at solemn ordinances; but it is not a match, for their hearts were never truly for it; so they sit still too, and go not up with him out of the wilderness, but their carcases fall there. So that they who are going up out of the wilderness, being so rare, are a strange sight.

USE I. of information. It informs us, that,

1. Serious souls need not think it strange, if they become a wonder to many, Psalm lxxi. 7. They are not meet to go up with Christ from the wilderness, that are not content to become a world's wonder for him. They must be fools for Christ that will be wise; Mark viii. *ult.*, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Worldly men wonder at seriousness now, what makes the saints so nice in points of truth and holiness; but that wonder will not last long, the world will soon see they had good reason for it all.

2. The world is no idle spectator of those who have given themselves to Christ, and profess to follow him. They take notice of them, and have their questions about them. Communicants, take heed to yourselves; many eyes are on you, as to your after-walk; God's eye is on you; the world's eyes will be upon you, they will take notice whether ye turn your back on the world, the ways and manners of it, or even sit still with themselves as before.

3. Those who shall still walk after the course of the world, continue sons of earth, not making away heavenward in the tenor of their life and conversation, are not espoused to Christ; though they have given him the hand, they have not given him the heart. The sincerity of your covenanting with God is now to be proved by your after-walk. If God be your Father, be setting homeward to his house. If Christ be your espoused husband, make away with him through the wilderness, and stay not behind. The friendship of the world is enmity with God.

4. *Lastly.* This world must be little worth, wherein, among such multitudes, there are so few such travellers, that they are a strange sight. There are many sad sights to be seen in the world, even after communions, but few of this sort of persons turning their backs on the world, and resolutely walking heavenwards. Take heed, Christians and communicants, that one of these three questions be not put concerning you, instead of this in the text. (1.) Who is this standing still in the wilderness? like the door on the hinges, oft moving, but never going forward, as proud, passionate, carnal, and sensual, as before? Isa. v. 6. (2.) Who is this going back from the wilderness to Egypt, to the flesh-pots there? back again to their profane and licentious courses? better ye had never known the way of righteousness. (3.) Who is this sticking in some mire, fallen into some pit in the wilderness; some gross and scandalous abomination? Many such trophy gets Satan set up.

Use II. Of exhortation. O Christians, communicants, walk so as the world may bear witness, that ye are going up out of the wilderness, leaning on your beloved; that your faces and hearts are heavenward; that ye have set off from them, and are no more theirs.

This would be much to the honour of Christ and religion, Acts iv. 13. It would be a great kindness to the world lying in wickedness, as an apt mean to bring others away with you, Zech. viii. *ult.* It would be the safety and comfort of your own souls, Cant. viii. 4.

Ye will walk so, if ye be habitually heavenly in the frame of your heart, like Enoch walking with God. Also, if in your conversation ye manifest a contempt of the world: *Germana illa bestia non curat aurum*, was Luther's character from his enemies. Likewise, if ye

be just in your dealings in the world to a niceness, counting it always safer to lose a pound, than unjustly gain a small penny. And further, if ye be clothed with humility and with humanity, meek, ruling your own spirit, doing good to all, even to those that wrong you; and are patient under trouble, and living by faith.

Doct. II. The life of believers as espoused to Christ, is a going up from the wilderness of this world, with him, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Take notice of some things supposed in it.

II. Unfold the believer's life, as a going up from the wilderness of this world, typified by the Israelites going up from the wilderness to Canaan.

III. Make application.

I. I shall take notice of some things supposed in this doctrine. It supposes, that,

1. As soon as a soul is espoused to Christ, it is loosed from the world. Its taking of him is a letting this world go, Matth. xiii. 44. The unbeliever hugs and embraces this world as his portion, and pursues it as the main thing; but when he closeth with Christ he saith, "Thou art my portion," and the esteem of the world sinks, Phil. iii. 8. Those that are espoused to Christ, are,

(1.) A loosed people. The bands with which the world held them are loosed; they gripe not it, nor it them, at the rate they formerly grasped one the other, Gal. vi. 14. While the sinner was without Christ, the profits and pleasures of the world were strong bands, which they could not get shaken off; but in the day of the power of converting grace, these give way, as tow does when touched with the fire. Then Christ says, "Loose him and let him go;" all is nothing in comparison of Christ.

(2.) A separated people. Though before they made one body with the world lying in wickedness, and were possessed with the same spirit of the world; yet in the day of their espousals to Christ, they are fairly separated from them, 2 Cor. vi. 17, even as a married woman ceases to be any more a member of her father's family, but becomes a member of her husband's, Psalm xlv. 10.

(3.) A new people. They are no more men of the world, though in it, Psalm xvii. 14, but heavenly men, 1 Cor. xv. 48. They have another spirit, Numb. xiv. 24, a new principle, ends, motives, and manner of life.

2. The soul espoused to Christ, being loosed from the world, is set in motion heavenwards, away from the world, Psalm lxxxiv. 5—7. That soul has begun a new journey, is set off in the Christian race,

that it may obtain the crown. Those that are in heaven have come to a fixed point of happiness; those in hell have come to a fixed point in misery; as to those that are in the wilderness of this world some of them are sitting still as in Sodom, till the fire of God fall on them and consume them; others, even true believers, are making away, as Lot out of Sodom, and as the Israelites out of the wilderness into Canaan.

3. The believer's journeying heavenwards is attended with many difficulties. It is an up-going, and that through a wilderness. They that mind for heaven must forego their own ease, and lay their account with troubles and trials of many sorts. The way to destruction is broad and easy; if men will but sit still, they will be carried quickly down the stream into the ocean of an eternity of wo. But if one minds for heaven, he must force his way, through many difficulties, Matth. vii. 13, 14, and xi. 12.

4. The believer's passage to heaven is also a work of time. It is not a leaping out of the wilderness into Canaan, but a going up out of it by degrees. It cost Israel long forty years in the wilderness. And the believer is longer or shorter kept in the wilderness, as seems meet to his God. Some are not long set upon the way, when they are at their journey's end; others it costs many a weary look to be at home.

5. Christ is with the believer in the journey. It is a weary land they have to go through, but they are not alone in it, Cant. iv. 8. In the day the soul is espoused to Christ, he is united to him spiritually, and that union once made is never broken again. So that wherever it is the believer's lot to go, Christ is with him, if it were through fire and water, Isa. xliii. 2. He is never so far from him, but that his faith may get hold of him, and he may lean on him.

6. *Lastly.* The end of this journey is a most comfortable one. Though the travelling be uneasy, the designed place of rest is most desirable, being Christ's Father's house, where the marriage is to be solemnized for ever, John xiv. 2. This is sufficient to bear up the heart of Christ's spouse through all the difficulties of the road, Heb. xi. 26, especially considering that Christ himself goes all along with her, Heb. xiii. 5.

II. I shall unfold the believer's life, as a going up from the wilderness of this world, typified by the Israelites going up from the wilderness to Canaan. And here I shall shew,

1. How they are brought unto the wilderness.
2. How the believer is set into it.
3. How he is going up from it.
4. The hardships and inconveniencies of the road.
5. The advantages and conveniencies of it.

*First*, I shall shew you how believers are brought unto the wilderness. The world is not a wilderness to them and in their esteem, till they be brought out of the Egyptian bondage of their natural state. Then, and not till then, they enter into their wilderness-state, And here one may remark these six things.

1. As the Israelites who came out of Egypt, went down into it in the loins of their fathers; so the elect of God were brought into their sinful and miserable state in the loins of our first father Adam, Rom. v. 12. And we are all born in that condition, and draw our first breath in that unhappy region.

2. The natural state of the elect is a state of bondage and slavery. Satan, as Pharaoh, is their prince there, and holds them fast at their drudgery, Eph. ii. 2, 3. They have many taskmasters there; as many reigning lusts as there are in their hearts, so many taskmasters are there holding them to their work.

3. As God, by the hand of Moses the lawgiver, and Aaron the high-priest, wrought the deliverance of the Israelites; so, by the law and the gospel, he carries on the deliverance of the elect out of their state of bondage. The law serves to awaken the sinner, and shew him his danger; the gospel discovers the remedy; and the Spirit of God makes both effectual.

4. There is no less opposition made by Satan to the sinner's deliverance from his spiritual bondage, than was by Pharaoh to the deliverance of the Israelites. He is loath to lose his subjects, loath to let his prisoners go. How often does the field seem to be won, and a fair appearance that the poor sinners shall be let go? and yet there are new attacks to be made before he will surrender.

5. Ordinarily, whenever the deliverance is set a-foot, the bondage becomes harder than ever before, Rom. vii. 9. Satan then musters up all his forces, and rages more than ever, that he may make the soul despair of a delivery. Now is the soul hard bestead, duties are bound on by the law laid to the conscience, under the pain of the curse, but no strength afforded; so the soul sees it must make brick while no straw is given. And by this means their corruptions are irritated, that they appear more vigorously than ever before, Rom. vii. 5.

6. *Lastly*. But at the set time, over the belly of all opposition, God brings his elect out of their spiritual bondage into the wilderness. There is a set time in the purpose of God for the delivery of every elect soul; and as at the appointed time precisely Israel was delivered, Exod. xii. 41, so are they, Jer. ii. 24. And no sooner do they comply with the gospel-call, and leave the spiritual Egypt, but as soon this world turns a wilderness unto them. And young con-

verts may lay their account with a hot pursuit from Satan to bring them back again, even as sure as the Israelites met with it from Pharaoh. But they may be assured that they shall get such a deliverance as the Israelites at the Red Sea, which shall make them sing.

*Secondly*, I shall shew how the believer is set into the wilderness. When once converting grace has made a fair separation betwixt the sinner and the world, presently he enters into a wilderness-state.

1. He cares not for the world as he was wont, Gal. vi. 14. Grace opening the eyes the world appears in its own colours, no more a fruitful field but a barren wilderness. The most pleasant spots in it appear lions' dens and mountains of leopards. Its best fruits appear as the apples of Sodom, fair to look at, but being handled fall to ashes, Psalm iv. 6, 7. He sees there is no rest for his heart in it, and therefore must look above and beyond it. The men of the world are no more his choice; their way and manner of life he can no more away with.

2. The world cares not for him as before, Gal. vi. 14. No sooner does a soul begin to look heavenward, but presently the world turns a strange world to him, John xv. 19. He must be content to dwell alone, and not to be reckoned among the nations. He bears the image which they hate, he is entered on a course opposite to theirs; and so the friendship breaks up. And he may lay his account with all the opposition they can make him with tongue and hand.

3. Then it becomes, by God's appointment, the place of trial for him, as the wilderness was to the Israelites, Deut. viii. 2. God could have taken his people a nearer way to Canaan than the way he led them; but for their trial he led them so long in the wilderness. So he could carry each believer straightway to heaven after their conversion; but he will have them pass their trials before they come there; so they must be content to take up their cross and follow him, and so long stand candidates for glory, while one trial is put to them after another; trials that will prove the reality and strength of their graces, the multiplicity of their corruptions and remaining vigour of them.

4. *Lastly.* It is no more his home or his rest; but the place of his pilgrimage, of his sojourning, the place he must travel through in his way home to his eternal rest, Heb. xi. 13. He must look on himself as upon a journey, one that is not to stay here, but must be going forward to the heavenly country.

*Thirdly*, I shall shew how the believer is going up from the wilderness; he is going up from it,

1. By the course of nature, which is swift as a post, a ship, and as an eagle's flight. It is but a little time, and believers will be at

their journey's end. Every day sets them a good way nearer their eternal rest, Rom. xiii. 11. If the days be evil, they are but few, and will soon be over. It is true that by this way the wicked are going out from the world too, but they are not going up, but down into destruction.

2. In the habitual bent of his heart and affections. Believers' hearts are turned off the world, and set on things above. Their face is homeward, their heart is there before them; for Christ is there, their treasure is there. Hence they are said to be those who love Christ's appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 8; and look for him, Heb. ix. 28. So when the carnal man is glued to this world, and desires no better heaven than what is here, they are going away from it in affection and desire.

But it may be the case of some gracious souls, that they cannot say they are thus going up from the world, nay, it is a terror to them to think of going out of it. I answer, there is a twofold desire to be away from the world, and to be with Christ. (1.) There is an explicit desire, like a rose full spread. Such was that of Paul; Phil. i. 23, "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ." This is found in believers, when they are not only in the exercise of grace, but have a full assurance of their eternal salvation. This makes the soul go up with full sail out of the world. (2.) An implicit desire which is like a rose-bud, where the leaves are to be found, if it be opened, though in the meantime they are covered, not being yet so ripe as to spread. This is found in believers, if they be at all in the exercise of grace, although they be in the dark as to their state. It is found in the groaning believer, who is groaning under the remains of sin, and would fain be free from them, groaning under want of communion with God, and would fain have it, and that so as not to be interrupted any more, Rom. vii. 24. The Lord reads the language of these groans so, and there wants only a full assurance of eternal happiness to make it plain language to the soul itself. See 2 Cor. v. 4. And thus the believer is going up from the wilderness, though with the wind in his face.

3. In progressive sanctification; Prov. iv. 18. By faith the soul is set on the way to Immanuel's land; it knits him to Christ the personal way, it sets him to holiness of heart and life, the real way, or the walking in the way; Col. ii. 6. And the believer goes on while he goes forward in holiness, especially when he is growing, adding a cubit to his spiritual stature; 2 Pet. iii. *ult.* This going up appears,

(1.) In mortification, when the believer is dying to sin, getting his former lusts weakened; Rom. viii. 13. Mortification is the daily

task of a believer ; the weeds of corruption in the heart are never so plucked up, but they will be ready to sprout again. These Canaanites are left in the land, that the believer may never be idle, but watch their motions and bear them down.

(2.) In vivification, in living to righteousness, when the soul holds forward in the way of duty over the belly of all opposition, especially in a holy and heavenly frame, going on in them with vigour, whether it be doing-work or suffering-work ; Cant. iii. 6. The soul married to Christ is to be for him, according to the law of marriage, Hos. iii. 3. As we live by him, so we must live to him. This was Paul's practice ; Phil. i. 21, "To me to live is Christ." More particularly,

4. In obtaining victory over the world ; 1 John v. 4. The world is an enemy to all that are set to go up from it. And many times it prevails to retard their course ; they are in it travelling in a stony, yea and thorny way, where there are many things to take hold of them, and hold them still ; so that they are in hazard of being entangled in the wilderness.

In this respect a believer goes up from the wilderness. And O but the picture of a believer thus going up from the wilderness is a beautiful one ; Cant. iii. 6, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" I shall essay to draw it in a few particulars. A believer espoused to Christ, and thus going up from the wilderness-world, is,

1. One who is keeping off from mixing with the men of the world, the natives of the weary land. Converting grace plucks them out from among them, and sets them over to Christ's side ; and establishing grace keeps them from mixing again ; Psalm xii. 7. There is a generation of God's wrath in the world, and they are labouring to save themselves from them ; Acts ii. 40. They are deserters of their company, shunning unnecessary fellowship with them ; for they know, that "a companion of fools shall be destroyed ;" Prov. xiii. 20. And they consort with those who are followers of the Lamb, companions of those that fear God.

2. He is holding off from the ways of the world ; Psalm xvii. 4. In the wilderness-world there are many ways, all of them leading to and terminating in some part of the wilderness ; some to the world's wealth, honours, peace, &c. But there is one way that leads out of it, terminates in the heavenly Canaan. The throng of the world goes in these many ways ; but the believers, and they only, take the pilgrim's way, which does but lie through it, neither beginning nor ending in the country ; and the grass may grow on it

for the natives, and they never set a foot on it; Isa. xxxv. 8. The men of the world ply them to turn them aside, and take their way; and if they catch them napping, they readily get them off; but the traveller towards Zion says as Israel to the king of Edom, "We will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left;" Numb. xx. 17.

3. He has a low estimate of the world's wisdom, and holds off from it as from a false light that would lead the traveller into a quagmire; 1 Cor. iii. 18, 19. Carnal wisdom has often been the ruin of Christ's interests in the church, and in the private case of Christians; leading into a betraying of truth and purity; procuring outward peace, but wounding one's conscience, and dishonouring God. But they that are going up from the wilderness, will be no admirers of the world's judgment in the matter of truth and error, sin and duty; for the generality of men have ever been, and will be, in that case, blind men judging of colours. And it is a dangerous thing to be carried away with the stream; Eph. ii. 2. A man that has no heart to keep off a way, because it is a way that is in vogue in the world, and will always row with the stream, is not going up from the wilderness. The fear of the world's putting the fool's cap on one's head, makes many a carcase fall in the wilderness.

4. He is keeping up a holy contempt of the world's good things; Heb. xi. 24, 25. Its profits and pleasures are sinking in their value with him; he "counts them but loss and dung, that he may win Christ;" Phil. iii. 8. To a gracious soul going up from the wilderness, the best things the world can afford, are so lightly esteemed, that he will not think them worth pains to go off the King's highway for them; Numb. xx. 17, "We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells;" while others allured with these baits, fall into one mire after another, and quit the travelling company, as Demas did Paul.

5. He is resolute to make his way through the world's ill things, to follow the way of God through good and bad report, Rev. xiv. 4. He is neither to be bribed nor boasted by the world out of the way of his duty; Cant. viii. 7, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." His feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and blow what weather it will, he must hold on till he be at his journey's end.

6. *Lastly.* His eyes are upon the other world; they are fixed on the prize, and running that they may obtain it, Heb. xi. 26. Their conversation is in heaven; they are habitually minding heavenly

things; their affections are set not on things on the earth, but on the things that are above. But I proceed to consider,

*Fourthly*, The hardships and inconveniencies of the wilderness-road, which the believer must lay his account with, while he goes up from the wilderness.

1. It is a weary land which the traveller has to go through, while he is going up from the wilderness, Isa. xxxii. 2. David calls the whole of it, the house of his pilgrimage. However lightly the natives, the men of the earth, may live in it, there is never one born from above that is travelling through it, but it is a weary land to them. It was a weary time the Israelites had of it in the wilderness; their patience soon began to wear out. And there is never a child of God, but sometime or other he has his fill of it, and being wearied, longs to be at home. The Son of God himself, we find, wearied here, John iv. 6.

2. It is a road that lies through a waste, affording no provision, Deut. xxxii. 10. When sin entered into the world, a withering curse followed on the back of sin, and turned the pleasant land into a waste, barren place. There was a blessing in everything in it before, but now everything is embittered in it. There is enough to raise the appetite of lusts, there are husks enough for them to feed on; but there is nothing in it to fill the soul, that is the produce of the country; and therefore the natives, though they are always feeding, they are never full. The Israelites would have starved in the wilderness, if they had not been furnished from another quarter; for there was neither meat nor drink there for them.

3. It is an howling wilderness which they have to go through, Deut. xxxii. 10, because of the wild beasts that haunt there, Cant. iv. 8, devils, and wicked men influenced by the devil. Sometimes the traveller must hear them roaring, Psalm lxxiv. 4, threatening to devour and swallow them up, and to make the name of Israel no more to be remembered, as the Egyptian wild beast did, Exod. xv. 9, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Sometimes he is entertained with their yellings, Jer. ii. 15. Their blasphemies, reproaches against God and his cause, their contradicting of the truths of religion, what are they but yellings of the wilderness, as ungrateful to holy ears as the yellings of beasts in the night? Sometimes he must find them tearing him, his name, reputation, substance, yea and his flesh sometimes, Psalm xxxv. 15, 16.

4. They must lay their account with scorching heats in it. Such was the wilderness to Israel, for which a cloud covered them by day. While they are upon the road through the wilderness, they are liable

to fiery heats of desertion from heaven; to fiery heats of temptation from hell, Eph. vi. 16, fiery trials of persecution from men, 1 Pet. iv. 12, and fiery heats of contention and division, the fire coming from the altar, Rev. viii. 5. All which make travelling Zionward to be very hard; and the more hard, the greater these heats are; which puts the spouse of Christ to that prayer, Cant. i. 7, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon."

5. It is a sickly place through which their way lieth. Many a groan was in the wilderness while Israel was in it; sometimes there were fiery serpents biting them, and sometimes a plague consuming them, so as many carcases fell in the wilderness. No less sickly a place is this world to the spiritual travellers. It is a heavy disease that is on them there, even a whole body of death, Rom. vii. 24. It affects and indisposes the whole man. They are liable to frequent relapses; and O the malignant influence it has on their journey, unfitting them for it, and at best causing them to go up but very slowly!

6. It is a difficult way through the wilderness. The road the travellers must go will try their patience, their strength, &c. They that must needs have an easy way through the wilderness, must take the way that leads down to the pit, not the way that leads up to Immanuel's land.

(1.) It is all upward, which scares most men at it, Psalm xxiv. 3, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? The way to heaven is up the hill, the way to hell down the hill.

(2.) It is a narrow way, Matth. vii. 14. Multitudes walk in the broad way, and there they get room enough, life-room, heart-room, conscience-room. But the King's highway has no such room in it, which obliges the travellers to take good heed to their feet, Eph. v. 15. And considering how rash we are naturally, how weak-headed, false-hearted, how narrow the road is, how loose the ground about it is, it is no great wonder that many of the travellers catch such falls, as make them go halting to the grave, Psalm li. 8.

(3.) It is a hard and rugged way; and therefore they must have leg-hardness, as soldiers had to preserve their feet from stones and roughness in the way of their march; Eph. vi. 15. There are many difficulties to go through, which will need resolution and undaunted courage.

(4.) It is a way wherein many snares are laid for them. In every lot in the world, and in the most innocent things, there are snares wherewith we may be caught. And sometimes men are busy making snares for us in the way wherein we walk.

7. It is a very solitary road, there is not much company to be got in it; Matth. vii. 14. Israel travelled alone through the wilderness, save that a mixed multitude joined with them, that they were much the worse of, and whose carcases fell in the wilderness. See how Miciah complains for want of company on the road, "Wo is me? for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe-fruit;" Micah vii. 1. In Elijah's days there were so very few upon the road, that he thought he had been alone upon it; he had so little help of the seven thousand, that he knew not of them; Rom. xi. 3, 4. At this rate the spiritual traveller has few.

(1.) To take a lift of his burden; Gal. vi. 2. Alas! we are in a strange world, where there are many to lay a load above the burden, but few to take a lift of it.

(2.) To consult with when he comes to a difficult step. There are many such steps that Christians will meet with in their way to Zion, especially when a mist rises in the wilderness. And it is no small mercy to have honest and tender men to advise with, and to have their sympathy and prayers. But of all these there is great scarcity in the wilderness.

8. *Lastly*, It is a road, wherein they must meet with armed enemies come forth to attack them, and ruin them. Pharaoh and his army pursued the Israelites in the wilderness; Exod. xiv. 3. Amalek fought them, chap. xvii. 8, both types of the devil and his agents. The Christian life is a fighting life; 2 Tim. iv. 7. All is not done when they are converted, they must fight their way through the wilderness to Canaan, and so fight as to overcome; Rev. iii. 21. The concluding of their peace with God in Christ, is proclaiming of war against the devil, the world, and the flesh; so they must put on their armour, if they would make their way through the wilderness.

*Fifthly*, I now come to show the advantages and conveniencies of the wilderness-road. The people of God, while in the wilderness-world, have as much allowed them from heaven as may balance the hardships of the wilderness.

1. The pillar of cloud to go before them in the wilderness; of which we have an account; Exod. xiii. 20, 21, 22, "And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way: and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." It was a type of Christ. He leaves them not alone in

the wilderness-world. Our Lord Christ is upon the head of the travelling company, Cant. iv. 8; and will be so till he have them all home. And this is sufficient to compensate the solitariness of the way.

The pillar seems to have been a fiery cloud, Exod. xiv. 20; the cloud representing Christ's human nature, the fire his divine nature; and to have been but one pillar; Numb. ix. 15, 16; Christ one person in two distinct natures. A God vailed with flesh, is the believer's company in the wilderness at all times; and even the man Christ travelled the wilderness-road himself too.

It had a dark side to their enemies, but a light side to the Israelites, Exod xiv. 20. Believers see a glory in Christ which the blind world sees nothing of, and therefore will not go up with him from the wilderness. The carnal world wonders at the believer's way-going from the wilderness; alas! they see not what he sees, the light side of the cloud goes before.

Now the cloudy pillar had a fourfold use to the Israelites in the wilderness, in a spiritual sense made good by Christ to his people in the wilderness-world.

(1.) They had the signal for marching or halting from it, Numb. ix. 17, &c. Their motions were directed by its motions. Thus the travellers from the wilderness-world are directed by Jesus Christ their Lord and Head, on whom the trust of bringing them safe to glory is devolved; Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him for —a leader and commander to the people." They must not stir till he give them the sign, though all the world, friends or foes, should cry, March; if they presume to do it, the cloud of glory will stay behind them, and they will find themselves entangled in the wilderness. They must not sit still when he gives them the sign to march, though all the world, friends or enemies, should cry, Halt; if they do, they will find the glory of the Lord will leave them, and their rest be blasted. Here lies their safety in the wilderness, in observing the word from heaven.

(2.) It led them in the way, Exod. xiii. 21. They would soon have missed their way in the pathless wilderness. So our Lord Christ leads his people in their way through the wilderness-world, Isa. lv. 4. In the wilderness there are many by-ways, many to lead the travellers off the way, besides a wandering disposition in their own nature. They will never get through safe, who take the guiding of themselves; but they who keep their eye on the cloud of glory before them, shall get through the most difficult steps of the wilderness-road, Prov. iii. 5, 6.

He leads his people through the wilderness, (1.) By his word,

which they must take good heed to, as that which determines the way, Isa. xxx. 21. By his word he chalks out the path through the wilderness, and whatever agrees not therewith is but a by-way, it is not the King's highway, Isa. viii. 20, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (2.) By his example, which is the marks of his own feet upon the way, 1 Pet. ii. 21. These we should narrowly observe, that we may follow them; hence says our Lord himself; Matth. xi. 29, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." We are apt to follow example; whose example should be so dear to us as his, who is our Father, Master, Husband? &c. That we might know how to walk through the wilderness, God himself came down from heaven, and in our nature walked through it. (3.) By his providence, which, duly compared with the word, contributes much to clear the way; Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." Ye are to be then careful observers of providences, which are really waymarks in the wilderness, Psalm cvii. *ult.* (4.) By his Spirit, which renders all the rest effectual; John xvi. 13, "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." He illuminates and causes to shine, the word, Christ's example, and providences. He illuminates the traveller too, as well as the way; disposes, moves, and efficaciously leads the traveller on his way.

(3.) It was a shelter to them from the heat of the sun by day; Psalm cv. 39. And so Christ shelters his people from the scorching heats in the wilderness; Isa. xxii. 2, and iv. 6. Let the heat of desertion, temptation, contention with men, and persecution, be never so great; Christ looked to by faith will be a sufficient sconce; Cant. i. 7. Many a time the gourds of created comforts are withered when the sun is hottest in the wilderness. Sons of men are found vanity and a lie. But Christ's shadow is ever broad and refreshing; Cant ii. 3, and the traveller can never come amiss to it.

(4.) It was a light to them by night, Exod. xiii. 21. There is many a dark night in the wilderness; and it is sometimes the lot of the people of God to travel in the night, as well as it was that of Israel, Numb. ix. 21. But Christ is a light to them in the darkest hour of the night; hence David could say, Psalm xxiii. 4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Sometimes the sun shines fair, and then there is no debate about the way: at other times a mist and darkness sits down in the wilderness, and then many are put to a stand; then is a time of wandering, stumbling, falling over this and the other precipice in the wilderness.

Many are lying fallen, and others come up and fall over them; and all because of the darkness. What way can one get through in such a time? Why, let them keep their eye on Christ the pillar of fire, and they shall have light in the midst of darkness, Job xxix. 3.

2. They have provision allowed them from heaven in the waste wilderness. And that must balance the scarcity and want there. The King's country affords them provision for their journey. Israel in the wilderness were provided both with meat and drink; and so are they that are going up from the wilderness of this world. In the wilderness there is,

(1.) Manna for them to eat, even Jesus Christ, to be fed on spiritually, John vi. 48—51, the only bread that can satisfy a soul. When the Egyptian provision is spent, the soul can no longer feed on the husks of the world, then the manna falls, the soul tastes the sweetness of Christ, in his person, offices, and benefits. It falls down about their tent-doors in the word of the everlasting gospel, exhibiting Christ with all his benefits to the soul; and it is gathered and ate by the application of saving faith, believing Christ to be offered, and taking Christ to itself, believing that it shall have life and salvation by him. And the more close, confident, and assured this application is, and the less mixed with doubting, the more the soul is fed.

(2.) Water out of the rock for them to drink, Exod. xvii. 6. This Rock is Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4. The Israelites might have perished in the wilderness for want of water, had it not been brought out of the rock; so had sinners perished, but that the blood of Christ was shed for their life. Behold Christ smitten by the law, before he could be drink to our souls.—Costly provision for the travellers! this is their provision till they come to Canaan's land.

3. Sometimes they are allowed a song in the weary land, for their comfort and recreation by the way, Psalm cxix. 54, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." We find Israel in the wilderness often complaining, groaning, and mourning; that is the ordinary in the wilderness-world; but seldom singing, that is reserved for the exercise in the promised land. Yet I find Israel singing in the wilderness three times.

(1.) At their entry into the wilderness, just after they came out from the Red Sea, Exod. xv. So young converts frequently have a parcel of pleasant days at their first setting off in the wilderness-journey, Hos. ii. 14. Religion is new to them; they are like men newly brought out of a dark dungeon, to whom the light has a double sweetness; and the Lord even so deals with them, as fathers with their children who are learning to go, holding out an apple to them, which they are not to expect when they are more confirmed; and

further, it is even to fit them for the hardships which they are afterwards to meet with.

(2.) When they were far on in the wilderness, and had been long in it, they sang upon the occasion of God's giving them a well without their complaining, or so much as asking for it, Numb. xxi. 17, "Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it." Many a heavy day had gone over their head between that and the last song they had had, (I reckon not their song at the idolatry of the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 18, which ended in sorrow.) The fiery serpents had been among them a little before. Yet God made them sing again. Thus sometimes God surprises the travellers with mercy after many a heavy day, that they think they will never sing more, and their souls have forgotten joy; yet he causes them to take down their harps from the willows, and puts a new song in their mouth; while he causes the wells of salvation to spring up to them.

(3.) In their last station in the wilderness, when they were encamping by Jordan, before they passed it, Deut. xxxi. 22, and chap. xxxii. It was forty years betwixt this and their first song. Thus they may have a weary time of it through the wilderness, who yet, when they come to the Jordan of death, shall be made to sing there the sweetest song that ever they sang, like the swan singing sweetest when a-dying. The nearer the rivers come to the sea, they are the sooner met by the tide. Motions in nature are so much the swifter as they come nearer the centre. And it may be a very cloudy day in which the sun shall shine brightest at its setting, Zech. xiv. 6, 7.

4. The Lord is their banner in the wilderness, and so they may be sure of victory, they shall be conquerors in the war, Exod. xvii. 15. Though they must fight, yet Christ the true Joshua is upon their head; he sits in heaven, who has the balance of victory in his hand; and he is their friend, and the cause is his own. Nay, they shall be more than conquerors. Israel was armed with the spoils of the Egyptian army, and Sihon and Og's lands they got possession of. Though the believer's battle with the world, the devil, and his own corruptions be sore; yet the spoils thereby gained are sweet, Psalm lxxiv. 14. They produce sweet experience of the Lord's goodness, Rom. v. 3, 4. Jacob was a man whose life had more trials than any of the Patriarchs; but as true as it was, it had more signal experiences too.

5. There is healing in the wilderness for them, for the wounds got there. There are fiery flying serpents to bite the people there, and they cannot miss the bites of the old serpent now and then. But there is the brazen serpent to look to and be healed; the ordinance relative thereto, we have, Numb. xxi. 8, 9, "And the Lord said unto

Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." This wilderness-world is the haunt of the old serpent, his prevailing temptations are his bites, the guilt remaining stings and galls the conscience; but Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross, and on the pole of the gospel, being looked to by faith, they are healed, Isa. xlv. 22. So Isa. xxxiii. *ult.*, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." And how often soever they be bitten, still the look of faith will be a healing look.

6. *Lastly.* We must not forget the tabernacle in the wilderness, which was the comfort of the godly Israelites there. There they had their stated meetings, and when anything more than ordinary ailed them in the wilderness, they used to draw towards the tabernacle. The tabernacle of gospel-ordinances is the great comfort of the travellers towards Zion. I shall only observe, that,

(1.) It was the place of meeting, namely, with God. The cloud of glory rested on it, and thence God spake. Gospel-ordinances are the place of meeting betwixt the Lord and his people in this wilderness-world, Prov. viii. 34, 35, and therefore they are even the pleasantest things in the wilderness.

(2.) It was coarse without, but rich and fine within. There was the golden candlestick, the shewbread table, incense-altar, ark, &c. All which believers have in Christ enjoyed in the ordinances.

(3.) *Lastly.* It was a moveable and slender thing. The tabernacle of gospel-ordinances is so. But wherever the Israelites went in the wilderness, they took the tabernacle with them. And the travellers to Zion, go where they will, dare not leave their religion, or their duties behind them. The tabernacle was often removed in the wilderness; but where it went, they went; none have a tack of the gospel; but wherever it goes, the travellers will go after it, cost what it will. Coarse fare and hard lodging with the gospel, will be by them preferred to the world's advantages without it. The tabernacle was suited to the wilderness, they had no temple there, that was reserved for the promised land of rest; but in heaven they shall have it, Rev. iii. 12.

I proceed now to the practical improvement of this subject.

Use I. Of information. From what is said we may draw the following inferences.

1. The people of God need not be surprised, that they meet with many hardships and trials in the world, and that it is a strange

world to them, John xvi. *ult.* While they are in it, they are in a wilderness. How then can they expect other than a wilderness-life? That the desert is to be turned into a paradise, nobody expects; why then look we to see the world other than a wilderness, if we mind for heaven? These things are useful.

(1.) To keep believers from sitting down in it, as their dwelling-place, Cant. iv. 8; or resting-place. A smiling world hugs many to death in its embraces; and the ease many find in it so charms the carnal heart, that the promised land is forgot, Matth. xvii. 4.

(2.) To quicken their pace out of it, and so work together for good to them, Rom. viii. 28. As a boisterous wind blowing on the back of the traveller, makes him sometimes run, while otherwise he would walk; so afflictions and trials put the believer to his duty, when he would not otherwise apply to it, and wean his heart more from the world; Micah vii. 7, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

(3.) To make heaven more desirable, 2 Cor. v. 4. The tossing they meet with on the sea of this world, makes them long for the shore, Job. vii. 2. And as rest is not so sweet to any as to the weary, nor meat as to the hungry; so heaven must be the more sweet in the enjoyment, that the believer has a weary life here.

2. They have good reason to bear all the hardships of their wilderness-lot patiently, and with Christian fortitude and cheerfulness. And that (1.) Because they will not last, they will be over ere long; they are going up from the wilderness. What inconveniencies are upon the road, the traveller matters not much, because he is not to stay with them. He may wonder indeed how people can dwell in a place to him so unpleasant; but it is but a light thing to him, because he is only a passenger. Indeed it is no wonder that the world's hardships be intolerable to them, who have no other portion but the things of the world; but they cannot be intolerable to the believer, who has a better portion, even one in heaven. (2.) Because the heavenly Canaan which the wilderness-road leads to, will make amends for all; "God shall then wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 4. Though the way be a rugged one, it leads to a paradise. Christ's espoused bride will forget all the wilderness-hardships, when she comes home to the marriage chamber in the Bridegroom's Father's house. (3.) Their lot is a wise mixture, take it at the worst. There are advantages allowed to balance the hardships, as ye have heard. There is no strait they can be in, in the wilderness, but there is help for it in the provision made for

them there. If the wilderness be a weary land, there are statutes that may be songs to them there, &c.

3. They are not Israelites indeed, nor espoused to Christ, who are not going up from this world as a wilderness, in heart and affection, in life and conversation. And such may lay their account, that their carcases will fall in the wilderness, and they shall not see Canaan's land. And such are,

(1.) Those whose hearts were never yet loosed from this world, and married to Christ, Matth. xiii. 44, 45. When man fell off from God, he fell to the creature, and his heart was wedded to it as the spring of his content and satisfaction. All the crosses in the world will not loose this knot; only efficacious grace discovering Christ in his surpassing glory to the sinner will do it.

(2.) Those who are walking according to the course of this world, Eph. ii. 2, framing their lives by worldly principles, being actuated by worldly motives, and acting for worldly ends as their chief design. Thus they are conformed to the world, which speaks them natives of the wilderness-world, not pilgrims in it. These, however their voice may be Jacob's, their hands are Esau's; though they pretend to be going heavenward, they are in the way to destruction.

The characters of them that walk are,

(1.) To do as the most do, not regarding how the best do; contrary to that plain injunction, Exod. xxiii. 2, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Thus the world is like a dunghill, where one part corrupts another, men fearlessly venturing on those courses and ways on which they see many before them. This is the downright reverse of going up from the wilderness, being a going along with the world, from which the apostle dehorts, Rom. xii. 2, "Be not conformed to this world."

(2.) To make the world one's business, and religion the by-hand work at best; not remembering what our Lord says, Matth. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." This is the way of the world, who look on their carnal interests as their chief interests, which therefore get the flower and strength of their affections. Whereas gracious souls go quite the contrary way, counting all things but loss, yea but dung that they may win Christ, Phil. iii. 8. And so our Lord directs us, Matth. vi. 33, to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

(3.) To step over conscience deliberately, to gratify lusts. Conscience among the men of the world is a very weak thing; and all its dictates, and the consideration of God's word as our rule, and

God's honour as concerned in men's actions, go very short way with them. Let the unjust man see gain within his reach, and the sensual man what may please his sensual lust; though God's command, honour, and conscience be between him and them, he can step over these, tread on them all, and gratify his lust, Hos. xii. 7, 8, and xiii. 6.

Use II. Of caution. While ye are in the wilderness, beware of wilderness sins and snares. And beware of,

1. Unbelief. That was a wilderness-sin of Israel's, Psalm. lxxviii. 22, "They believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation." Yea, it was the sin that kept the whole generation that came out of Egypt, out of Canaan, Heb. iii. 18, 19. Many that seem to have been set fair on the way to the heavenly Canaan, come short of it this way. They believe not the record that God hath given concerning his Son, and so they never embrace Christ but perish. And the unbelief of saints while they are in the wilderness, does them much harm. It plucks away from their strength, and leaves them most unfit for their journey.

2. Murmuring, 1 Cor. x. 10. Many times God's anger was kindled against Israel for their murmurings in the wilderness. And it is incident to us in this wilderness-world, through the trials, crosses, and troubles that must be met with there. They had need of mortified affections that travel the wilderness-way, else they cannot in patience possess their souls. And when people have lost their patience, and their spirits are on the fret, everything ruffles them, and the hard way becomes harder.

3. Lusting, 1 Cor. x. 6. Let not the loose be given to your hearts, to fix on any thing which providence sees meet to withhold from you, so that ye must have it, and cannot be satisfied without it. Thus the Israelites lusted for flesh, and they got it with a vengeance, Numb. xi., Psalm lxxviii. 30, 31. And it is ordinary that what people pull off the tree of providence before it be ripe for them, sets their teeth on edge, and proves a snare to them. There is nothing better than a weaned heart to fit one for the wilderness-way.

4. Looking back to Egypt, Numb. xiv. 4. There is a root of apostacy in every one's heart, though broken in the sincere, yet reigning in others; hence it comes to pass, that many go far back, and lose what they have attained in religion, making themselves new work, with difficulty to recover what they threw away; and many fall away for good and all, and never recover. We had much need to take heed to the first rising of these evil motions in the heart; Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

5. Fawning and flattering enemies, Numb. xxv. 17, 18. Pharaoh's

pursuit with his chariots and horses, Amalek's sword and bow, did not the mischief to Israel in the wilderness, that the daughters of Moab did, Numb. xxv. Balaam tried all his art to curse them, but could do them no harm by all his enchantments; but the Midianitish women ruined them with theirs, ver. 9. The church of God has often weathered out the storm of persecution, and came off victorious; while she has been ruined with the soft methods of the enemy. And many have stood out against the frowning world, that have been cast down with the smiling world. They have been drawn to destruction with silken cords of temptation, who could not be driven to it with iron rods.

6. *Lastly*. The mixed multitude, Exod. xii. 38. They were a black sight to Israel in the wilderness, a sad snare to them, Numb. xi. 4. They came in among them from a carnal principle of worldly interest, and were a snare to them, and their carcases fell in the wilderness. When God brings his church out of the house of bondage, and gives her peace, a company of carnal men driving their own worldly interest, join them like a swarm of insects in a summer-day, (Exod. xii. 38, a great mixture, Heb.); and the more their number increases, the more mischief they do to her true interests, sacrificing them to their own. It is not a little owing to the influence of that mixed multitude both of ministers and professors, that religion and its interests are at so low an ebb this day; and therefore we have ground to expect a stroke, come from what quarter it will, that will make a dispersion among us, and lessen our numbers, Ezek. xx. 37, 38. In the meantime beware of those who have a name to live, and are dead; formal professors often hurt a Christian more than the profane.

Use III. Of exhortation. And,

*First*, Ye who profess to be espoused to Christ, evidence the reality of it by your going up from the wilderness-world with him in heart and affection, in the progress of sanctification, and contempt of the world, holding off from the ways of it. To press this, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Without this ye cannot evidence your sincerity, 1 John ii. 15. If your treasure be in heaven, your heart will be there. If Christ be indeed your espoused Husband, ye will forsake your father's house for him, and follow him. But many give him the hand and not the heart; and therefore though called by his name, dwell at their father's house still.

2. Without this ye will bring a reproach on religion, which suffers extremely by those who profess Christ, and yet follow the way of the world, Rom. ii. 24. Alas! for the wounds thus given to reli-

gion by the worldly disposition of the professors of it, whose untender lives, and covetous practices, proclaim them sons of earth.

3. *Lastly.* Ye may be very useful for Christ in the world this way, by commending religion practically at this rate to the consciences of carnal men. "Who is this that goeth up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" say the daughters of Jerusalem. What can have more influence upon them, than to see men dead to the world, heavenly in their disposition, walking as pilgrims on the earth? It is a noble testimony for God.

(1.) To the vanity of the world, while men in their practice tread on that which carnal men set their hearts upon. What avails it for a man to talk of the world's vanity, while he is still griping it as his life, cannot part with it at God's call, for God's honour and service; but, on the contrary, is dishonouring God, and wounding his own soul, to gain it? That is building with the one hand, and destroying with the other.

(2.) To the reality and excellency of religion, and heavenly things, 1 Pet. iv. 4; Cant. iii. 6. It speaks a power in religion that can carry men above these perishing things, and that they must be fed from some other quarter, that so little value the streams of earthly things.

*Secondly*, Strangers to Christ, be espoused to him, that ye may go up with him from this wilderness-world, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan, believe that Christ is offered in an everlasting marriage-covenant to you. Embrace ye and accept, and so close with him as your head and husband, for time and eternity. I offer the following motives to enforce this exhortation.

Motive I. Jesus Christ is really and truly in suit of your souls. This is the gospel-offer; Hos. ii. 19, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies;" and nothing will hinder but the want of your consent; Matth. xxii. 4, "All things are ready; come unto the marriage." He has with his precious blood bought a bride to himself, and he comes in the gospel to gain her heart to himself. And he is come to you this day; O then slight not the offer.

2. If ye accept of Christ, he will carry you up from this wilderness-world to his Father's house, where the marriage will be solemnised for ever. He will leave none of his behind him. There may be a time betwixt the espousals and marriage; but in that time he is carrying them to the marriage-chamber.

3. There is no loosing of the heart from the world without engaging it to Jesus Christ, Matth. xiii. 45, 46. It is the discovery of the

one pearl that makes one give over seeking the many. The heart of man is like a child that will not let the knife go out of its hand, till something that pleases it better is put into it. Though the devil go out, if the house be empty, he will return again, Matth. xii. 44, 45.

4. *Lastly*, If ye are not espoused to Christ, ye will fall in the wilderness, and never see the heavenly Canaan, Heb. iv. 12. They will have no access to the marriage above, that are not espoused to Christ here below. Nor will they be transplanted into the paradise above, who are not first planted in the nursery of grace below.

*Thirdly*. I invite, and sound an alarm to you all, to go up from this wilderness world with Christ. Rise, ye that are espoused to him, and come away. Rise, ye dwellers in the wilderness. Take him as your head and husband, and go along with him towards the heavenly Canaan, leaving this world in heart and affection.

Quest. How shall I get up from the wilderness world, how will I get through it to the heavenly Canaan, while the journey is so hard and difficult for a poor weak creature? Answ. I give you your directions and advice in a third doctrine from the text.

Doctrine. The way to get up from the wilderness-world to the heavenly Canaan, is to go all along leaning on Jesus Christ by faith. The way to live well in this world, till we come to heaven, is to live by faith.

Here I shall briefly shew what it is to go leaning, or to live by faith; and that we are allowed to go thus.

I. I shall shew briefly what it is to go leaning, or to live by faith.

1. It supposes the soul's taking, receiving, and embracing Christ for its head and husband, John i. 12. In the gospel Jesus Christ is offered, presented, and exhibited to every one that hears it, as the Father's gift to them, Isa. ix. 6; John iv. 10. He says in effect, "Poor souls, ye can never of yourselves make your way up through the wilderness; but I freely give you a strong one to lean upon. Take him and welcome." Hereupon the soul takes its hold of Christ for that end, the soul believes the gospel offer or promise as made to itself, saying in effect, "Then he is mine by the free offer made to me;" which implies the heart's consent to take him, and so the espousals are made, 1 John v. 11. It bears a going,

2. Cleaving to him, Acts xi. 23. Faith joins the soul to the Lord, so as to be one with him; and so holds the gripe, and will not quit it. The believer hangs by Christ, by the word of the gospel; and as the weak woman dares not lean to her own strength, but cleaves to her husband on the journey, so does the believer to Christ.

3. A going on under a sense of weakness, 2 Cor. iii. 5. There are two causes of one's going leaning upon another. One is love, the other weakness; both concur here. The believer loves Christ as his Lord and Husband, and therefore will lean on him; he is sensible of utter weakness and inability to make the journey in his own strength, and therefore must lean on him. Faith is a self-emptying grace, and therefore is chosen to be the mean of communication on our part betwixt the Lord and us, Rom. iv. 16.

4. A going on, laying our weight on the Lord Jesus for the whole of the journey, Psalm lv. 22. When the believer sets out with Christ, he says to him, "All thy wants be on me." "So be it," says the believing soul, and so rolls itself upon him for all. Hence faith is called a staying, Isa. l. 10, as an old man stays himself upon his staff; a believing on Christ, as a chief corner-stone, *i. e.* laying the weight on him, as the foundation, 1 Pet. ii. 6.

5. *Lastly.* A going on, with a persuasion that we shall be borne up and borne through by him, 2 Tim. i. 12. This is the plain import of leaning on Christ; for none will ever lean on that for help, concerning which they have no manner of persuasion that they shall be helped by it. Thus faith is called trusting in God, relying on him, both which bear this persuasion. And they that would remove this from the nature of faith, would destroy it, and leave us a mere wavering opinion in its stead.

But as one may lean trembling, so faith may be accompanied with doubting. But as trembling belongs not to the nature of leaning, but is opposite to it; so doubting belongs not to the nature of faith, but is opposite to it. And the more trembling the less leaning, so the more doubting the less faith.

This going up from the wilderness, leaning, is walking in Christ Jesus as we have received him, Col. ii. 6, which is the only true holiness competent to fallen man.

II. I shall shew, that we are allowed to go thus leaning. Consider, that,

1. The Father has appointed the Mediator for this very end, that so he may bring many sons to glory, Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people." The first man, with all his children in his loins, set off alone through the world, on his own stock; and fell, being unable to make the journey. Wherefore now the strength for all the heirs of glory is lodged in Christ, and they are allowed to live and lean on him; 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 2 Tim. ii. 1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

2. We are called and commanded to lean on him; Psalm lv. 22, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not into thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Psalm xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Isa. xxvi. 3, 4, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." It is the great duty called for in the Old and New Testament. We honour the Father and the Son, by doing this through the Spirit.

3. To pretend to go another way, is an abomination to the Lord, Prov. iii. 9. We know no holiness of Adam's fallen children, but what is a walking in Jesus Christ. Men may call the obedience given to the law otherwise, holiness; but a holy God will never own it as such, when it savours not of union with his Son.

Use. Then if ye would go up from the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, go leaning on Jesus Christ.

1. Go leaning on him for light to know your duty, Prov. iii. 5. Ye are in the wilderness; let him be eyes to you there; look to him, as the Israelites did to the motions of the cloud, for your direction. He is the great Prophet and Teacher; close your own eyes that ye may be guided by his word and Spirit.

2. Go leaning on him for strength to perform your duty, Phil. iv. 13. It will not be your weak hands that will work the work, nor your feeble knees that will perform the journey. The strength must come from him who is the Head. And ye must go on borrowed legs.

3. *Lastly.* Go leaning on him for acceptance, and the happy issue of your journey, Eph. i. 6. It is through him alone that any step in the Lord's way can be accepted, and by him alone we can be brought into the eternal rest.

In all this ye are to believe the word of promise, and on the credit of it to set about your duty, renouncing yourselves, and believing and applying the sufficiency treasured up in Christ.

Great is your need of leaning; ye have great work to do, a great journey to go, much weakness hangs about you, much opposition ye must encounter; yet forward ye must be out of the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan, else ye perish.

## ENOCH'S CHARACTER AND TRANSLATION EXPLAINED; WITH A DESCRIPTION OF WALKING WITH GO , AS THAT IN WHICH THE LIFE OF RELIGION LIES.*

GENESIS v. 24,

*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.*

IT is too evident, that the generation we live in is in a declining condition; that professors are few, but real Christians fewer by far. Religion with many is turned to be the object of their ridicule; and among those that own it, to merely dry and sapless notions, for the most part. Few now are added to the church, or brought over out of the devil's camp. True godliness languishes, and serious experimental religion wears out. Therefore I would press religion in the life and power of it, on those that would save themselves from this untoward generation.

Here shines the brightest star in the patriarchal age, which having given light to the lower world for a time, was afterwards translated into a higher sphere, and passed out of the world in as unusual a manner as he lived in it. For as men live in the world, so ordinarily they go out of it.

There is a long account here, where nothing is marked but names and numbers, men's living and dying, till we come to Enoch, whose singular piety is recorded. OBSERVE. The life of man is for the most part a vain thing, of which, by the sleeping of some, and the slumbering of others, nothing remains remarkable, but that they lived and died. But close walking with God serves another and better purpose, than to cause one just fill up room in the world for a while.

From the short history of these antediluvian patriarchs, we may learn one lesson, that will serve us all our days, viz. That we must die, how long soever we live. It is reported of one, that by hearing this chapter read in the church, he got such an impression of his own death, that he turned religious, that he might die well. *Drexel. de ætern.*

But from the history of Enoch we may learn two lessons. 1. How to live well in this world. 2. The happiness that abides those in another world, who so live here; even eternal happiness of soul and body with the Lord.

* Several sermons preached at Ettrick, in the year 1716.

In the words there is remarked a real preaching that was given to the old world by Enoch; a life-preaching; for his conversation preached to them, what religion was, and what was their great duty, viz. walking with God; a removal-preaching, (we cannot say his death preached, for he did not die; but his passage out of this world preached), that there is another and a better life with God in another world, both for soul and body. And this is no doubt marked, to shew us the mercy bestowed on that generation, that the godly in it might be encouraged, and the wicked left without excuse, while such a bright star shone so fair in that dark age. For it is observable, that his walking with God is twice told, once, ver. 22, and here again in the text, in conjunction with his happy removal, giving us a compendious body of divinity, written for the use of that age especially, (not excluding others), in this man's life and translation out of the world. So that God left not himself without a witness in that degenerate age. They not only heard, but saw in him, the power of godliness, and the reward of it too.

Observe, Men will not only have the best instructions and warnings they get from the world, but those they get from the examples of holy men, to answer for in the day of accounts. There are silent preachers, who yet speak home, as Noah, who "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world;" Heb. xi. 7; and the men of Nineveh, and the queen of the south, of whom our Lord says, Matth. xii. 41, 42, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Examples of a holy life, if they do not lead spectators to heaven, will drive them more deeply into destruction.

Though it is charitably thought, that all the patriarchs were good men, yet surely the age wherein Enoch lived was a very degenerate and profane age, Methuselah his son died the same year the deluge came on. He lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years. Enoch walked with God three hundred years. So from his translation there were six hundred and sixty-nine to the deluge. Of that they got one hundred and twenty years' warning of the deluge; so that to that time there were but five hundred and forty-nine years. There were none of those here mentioned but they lived more than seven hundred years. And God's Spirit had been long striving with the

generation before the last hundred and twenty years. So that we may well reckon that many of those who lived in Enoch's days, were of those God's Spirit had so long striven with, and that were swept away by the deluge; and consequently that it was a very degenerate and profane age he lived in, wherein men had come the length to talk and act boldly against the God that made them, as appears from Jude 14, 15, "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

OBSERVE, Be the times never so bad, it is men's own fault they are bad too. Eminent holiness, and intimate communion with God, may be attained in the worst of times. While that generation was running to ruin, Enoch walked with God.

The reasons are,

1. Because however men grow worse and worse, heaven is still as good and bountiful as ever; Isa. lix. 1, 2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." God's door still stands open, though the generation conspire to trouble it very little for supply. Our Lord will never shut his door upon his people, because they are few; but it shall stand open as long as there is one that hath business in his house; Micah ii. 7, "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?"

2. Because those that mind for heaven, must row against the stream always; and if they do not, they will be called down the stream in the best of times; for, says our Lord, Matth. xi. 12, "From the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." If people will ply the throne of grace, and resolutely set themselves against the epidemical disease of their day, they may keep lively in the midst of a dead crew, though with much difficulty, as our Lord observes; Rev. iii. 4, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments."

3. The badness of the times affords matter to excite God's people the more to their duty, and close walking with God. The profaneness and formality of those they live among, and the dishonour done to God thereby, should be like oil to the flame of their holy love and

zeal, as it was to David; Psalm cxix. 126, 127, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." The prospect of what must needs be the issue of such apostasy of a generation may also quicken them; even as one is the more concerned to see to his own safety, that the rest of the family are pulling down the house about their own ears; as was the case with Noah, who, among a very wicked and abandoned people, had this character, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God," Gen. vi. 9.

4. *Lastly.* Because as the Lord shews himself most concerned for the welfare of those who are most concerned for his honour; so the worse the times are, they that cleave to him closely may expect to fare the better, as Noah also did, when the Lord said to him, "Come thou, and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," Gen. vii. 1. Moses never had a more glorious manifestation of God, than at the time when the Israelites had fallen into the idolatry of the golden calf, and God was about to destroy the whole nation; as you will find by comparing Exod. xxxii. 10, and chap. xxxiii. and xxxiv.

Use 1. Learn that those who keep not up communion with God, in the life and power of religion, in evil times, are in God's account joined and embarked with the generation of his wrath; and be who they will, they will smart with the rest for it, though they put not forth their hands to the notorious abominations of the times they live in. Hence is that threatening, Zeph. i. 12, "It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." It is a heavy word that sets formal hypocrites and profane wretches on one and the same bottom; Psalm cxxv. *ult.*, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

2. Bad example with its influence will not excuse people before the Lord. While it is no comfort to go to hell with company, there can be no safety in following a multitude to do evil. What! will men think that because the conspiracy against God and holiness is strong, therefore they may join in it; that because serious godliness is going over the brae, therefore they may give it a push? But wo will be to them that give an unhallowed touch to God's wain when it is at the halting.

3. To be complaining of the evil of the times, sighing and going backward in religion, is a fruitless unavailing complaint, neither

pleasing to God, nor profitable to one's self. For at no time does religion consist in talking, but in walking with God. And that is but to condemn ourselves out of our own mouths.

4. *Lastly.* Let us be exhorted to study the power and reality of religion in these dregs of time. Let us draw the nearer to God, that we see so many going far from him. And as we would not bring the wrath of God on ourselves, let us neither join with a profane generation, nor continue on our lees with a formal dead-hearted generation, strangers to the power of godliness. Consider here,

1. Enoch's holy life in this world.

2. His happy removal into a better world.

First, Let us consider Enoch's holy life in this world; "Enoch walked with God." The Spirit of God puts a special remark on this. It is Enoch's honour, that he did not walk as others did, after their lusts. Yea, he walked more holily and closely with God, than other good men of that age.

Observe 1. God takes special notice of those who are best when others are worst, Gen. vi. 9. We see this in the instance of Noah in the old world, and of Lot in Sodom; likewise of those mentioned Ezek. ix. 4, concerning whom the Lord said, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof;" and those taken notice of Mal. iii. 16, 17, "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

1. To be thus argues an ingenuous spirit, a love to the Lord for himself, and a love to his way for its likeness to himself; that the soul is carried thus to it against the stream of the corruption of the age.

2. It argues not only grace, but the strength of grace. It must be strong faith, love, &c. that so much bear out against the strong temptation to apostasy, arising from the combination of a generation against God and his way. To be holy when the helps to a holy life are least in the world, argues the vigour of grace in the heart.

Use. Labour ye then to be best while others are worst, to confront the impiety of the generation wherein ye live. Do they indulge themselves in licentiousness? be ye the more strict and holy in your walk. Do they take up with mere externals in religion? strive ye the rather to get into the inner court, to taste and see, and here to have communion with God.

Observe. 2. It is the honour of a professor of religion, to outgo others in the matter of close walking with God. God himself is glorious in holiness. The more holy one is, the more like is he to God. The liker he is to God, the more honourable is he.

Use 1. This lets us see what would be a blessed emulation among professors, viz. that we were striving who should be most tender, holy, and circumspect. O that that were brought in, in the room of all our strifes and contests about practices and opinions, which eat out the life of religion in our day! But alas! real holiness is little regarded, and therefore little striven for.

2. It must be a godless-like mark in any person, to have the serpentine grudge rise in their breasts against others, as they see them eminent for holy and tender walking. These are the persons most beloved and honoured of God; and it looks devilish-like to hate them, and have one's heart rise against them, for that very reason for which God loves them.

In the first part of the words we have,

1. The person characterized; and that is Enoch. There was another of this name descended from Cain, who had a city called after his name; Gen. iv. 17. Immortality is desired of all; and because men cannot stave off death, they follow after a shadow of immortality, that at least their name may live when they are gone. Therefore that has been an ancient custom, for men to call their lands after their own names; Psalm xlix. 11. How much better was it with this Enoch, that took that course to get on him the name of the city of God, which Christ promises to write on all his people? Rev. iii. 12. The city called by the name of the other Enoch was destroyed by the deluge, and is now unknown; but the city of God lasts still, and will last for ever.

Observe. True piety is the best way to honour, even to true honour. For "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," when "the memory of the wicked shall rot."

Enoch signifies dedicated, initiated, instructed. His life answered his name, for he lived as one devoted to the Lord. Observe. It is the duty of those devoted to God by their godly parents, to devote themselves to the Lord. And where grace comes in with good education, it ordinarily makes men famous in their generation, and signally serviceable to God.

He was the seventh from Adam, and a prophet, who foretold the last judgment, even in that early age of the church; Jude 14, above cited. He was like Noah, a preacher of righteousness in his day; and like John Baptist, a burning and shining light, burning in his conversation, shining in his doctrine.

OBSERVE. They that live near God, are most likely to be put upon his secrets, and to know most of his mind; Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."

2. His character; he "walked with God." He lived like a man of another world; a life of close communion with God. It imports, (1.) That he was really religious; not only religious before men, but before God. OBSERVE. Religion lies inwardly. We are that really which we are before the Lord; Rom. ii. *ult.*, "He is a Jew which is one inwardly." (2.) He was eminently religious. OBSERVE. Men may attain to eminency in religion, in very bad times, by setting the Lord always before them. See here,

1*st*, What he was; a spiritual traveller through the world; he "walked." Whereas it is said of others, they "lived;" it is said of Enoch, "He walked with God." He looked on himself as a pilgrim and stranger in this present world; Heb. xi. 13, compare ver. 5, and did not sit down in it to take up his abode on this side Jordan.

OBSERVE. They that would live a life of communion with God, must live as pilgrims in this world, as travellers through it to a better country.

1. Their hearts must be loosed from the world, bidding an eternal farewell to it as a portion; 1 John ii. 15. The heart gone from God naturally sits down on the creature, to suck the sap of it, and to pursue it as its chief good. Now, the first step to the soul's thriving, is to lift the heart from the creature, and once fairly to give up with the vain world.

2. They must be fixed on the better country; Heb. xi. 14. They must look to the land that is afar off, resolutely aiming to be there, and therefore habitually keeping it in their eye, as the mark they desire to hit; Phil. iii. 20. Thus we shall be heavenly in the frame and disposition of our spirits.

3. They must keep death much in their view, the passage out of this world into the other; Job xiv. 14, "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." See what a familiarity he had contracted with it; chap. xvii. 14, "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." This is the way to wean our hearts from the world, and to stir us up to converse much with another world.

4. *Lastly.* They must beware of dipping deep in things of this life, but go through the world lightly, like travellers, who serve themselves with a passing view of those parts they go through;

1 Cor. vii. 29—31, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away."

The reason is, because the world is one of the great make-bates betwixt God and a soul. And so far as it gets in betwixt God and us, it causes an eclipse of the light of the Lord's countenance.

Use. As ever ye would live a life of communion with God, live as pilgrims in this world. The manna never fell from heaven in the wilderness, till the provision brought from Egypt was spent and done. Deny yourselves to this world, if ye would have the taste of things of a better world. When the vessels of your hearts are emptied of the love of the world, the oil of grace will run.

2*dly*, The company he kept while he was in the way; "He walked with God." He did not walk with the generation he lived in; did not go on with the multitude, thinking it enough to do as they did; but he "walked with God," being a follower of the Lord, keeping his eye on him.

Observe. True religion makes one give up with the way of the world, and set God before them for all. It is the way of strangers from God to follow the course of this world; Eph. ii. 2. They that mind for heaven, must be nonconformists to the world; Rom. xii. 2. They must be practical separatists from the world, in life and conversation; Psalm xii. 7, as it was with Joshua, who said, chap. xxiv. 15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Use 1. See here what a graceless-like thing it is for people to content themselves to be like neighbour and others. Ah, Sirs, though all the world should approve you, if God condemn you, what will it avail? They that pin their faith or holiness on other people's sleeve, have neither faith nor holiness, and will never see heaven.

2. See the necessity of a religion beyond the reach of the common gang of the world; Zech. iii. 8. Ye must not satisfy yourselves with the religion that most part do; but press forward to leave them behind you, because they do not walk with God.

3*dly*, His constancy in the way of the Lord; he "walked incessantly" as the word signifies. He did not take his religion by fits and starts, as many do, but he kept a constant course of it. Ver. 22 tells us, he walked with God three hundred years, all the time he lived after he begat Methuselah. Though perhaps he was a good man while he lived single in his young days, yet his last days were his best days. His greatest eminency for piety was in the days of

his married life; while his family was increasing, his soul was increasing too.

OBSERVE. A married state is a state of life very consistent with the soul's flourishing in religion.

USE. How unreasonable, then, is that excuse, which goes mighty far with the world; Luke xiv. 20, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come?" It was not so with Enoch; the comforts of it did not so bewitch him, nor the cares of it so rack his spirit, but that he was one of the holiest and heavenliest men that ever lived. What a pity is it, that that state should be a state of declining in religion to so many, and that as their family increases, their soul's case goes to wreck? So that of their marriage-day it may be said, as John vi. 66, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." It is a holy state, and a helpful one, by God's appointment. It must needs be a dreadful business, where the one proves a snare to the other, for apostasy from the life of God.

*Secondly*, There is Enoch's happy removal into a better world.

1. Consider his leaving of this world; "He was not:" no more in this world. Of all the rest it is said, they "died;" but of him only, "he was not," for he died not, but got out of the world without dying. He was taken off,

1*st*, Soon, being only three hundred and sixty-five years of age. That was in the midst of his days; for there were none of the patriarchs before the flood, but lived more than as long again.

OBSERVE. God ofttimes takes them soonest out of the world that are dearest to him. Why then should we be fond of long life? He was a man that was dear to God, and useful for God. And if he did not live long, he lived fast, and did more in his few days, than others in double the time. He had no loss, for the remainder of his days he got in heaven.

2*dly*, Suddenly; so the phrase seems to import; Psalm xxxvii. 36, and so the nature of the thing requires it to be; as in the case of Elijah; 2 Kings ii. 11, and those who shall be changed; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, cases parallel to this. He evanished.

OBSERVE. A sudden removal out of the world may befal the best of God's children. Why should the Lord's people then be afraid of sudden death? It does but make sore work short work; and they that are in Christ can never be taken habitually at least unprepared; and they that always walk habitually with God, are always actually prepared. Good old Eli died such a death.

2. Consider his transportation to heaven; "God took him;" took him home, took him up soul and body at once to himself into hea-

ven; Heb. xi. 5. God made a change on his corruptible body without death, even such a change as will be made on the bodies of the saints that shall be alive at Christ's second coming. So there was as great a difference betwixt his removal and that of others, as betwixt his life and theirs.

Observe. When the saints leave the world, God takes them home to himself.

All the patriarchs mentioned in this chapter were alive at Enoch's translation, except Adam, who died some time before, and Noah, who was born some time after. Adam himself had heard the voice of God, and Noah got an eminent confirmation of his faith in his preservation in the ark. Enoch's translation might be confirming to the rest, in the faith of a future happy state of the saints, both in soul and body. And it was a sure pledge of the resurrection, that was then far off, and not yet come.

Observe. The weight of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which God so early confirmed. It is worthy to be remarked, how Enoch's body was carried to heaven before the law, Elijah's under the law, and Christ's under the gospel. So that each of the three great periods of the world's age had in it a notable pledge of the resurrection of the body.

Use. Let us then live and die in the faith of it; and while we live, live as those that look for it.

Having thus given a large practical explication of the text, I proceeed to observe a point of doctrine from them, as the ground of some further discourse.

Doctrine. The life of religion lies in walking with God; or, the great thing we should aim at for practical godliness, is to walk with God.

Here I shall,

I. Explain this walking with God.

II. Confirm the doctrine, that the life of religion lies in walking with God.

III. *Lastly.* Apply.

I. For explication of this walking with God, I shall consider it,

1. In the foundation thereof, with respect to our state.

2. In the matter of it, in respect of our frame and conversation.

3. In the properties thereof.

First. I am to consider walking with God in the foundation thereof, with respect to our state. And so it pre-supposes,

*First*, Spiritual life restored to the soul in regeneration. Men are naturally dead to God and holiness; Eph. ii. 1, "dead in trespasses

and sins." A dead man cannot walk, and a dead soul cannot walk with God. Before Lazarus once in his grave could move again, he behoved to be quickened and raised again. No wonder that many cannot walk with God, seeing they are strangers to the life of God. They live as they were born in a natural state. Consider,

1. The eye of the understanding is out, and man naturally is blind; Eph. v. 8. Walking with God is a regular walk; how then can the blind soul walk so? To walk at random is to walk contrary to God; Lev. xxvi. 21. *Heb.* Never a soul will stumble on the way of God; for while in the state of blindness, Satan and lusts lead the soul. Therefore we must be cured by divine illumination; and for this cause the gospel is preached; Acts xxvi. 18, "to open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light."

2. The feet of the soul, the will and affections, are quite indisposed for walking with God, and they must be cured. Hence is the promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

(1.) They are distorted, disjointed, and cannot ply to the way of God; Jer. xiii. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." They have got a set to backsliding from the Lord, and they cannot be cured without a miracle of grace. That must give them a new set, or we are undone for ever; Psalm lxxxv. *ult.*, "Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps."

(2.) They are weak, and unable to bear us in his way, Rom. v. 6. We lost our strength in the loins of our first parents, and never recover it till we be in Christ, to partake of his Spirit. If the soul aim to rise, it cannot; if to walk, the legs fail under us. Nay,

(3.) They are powerless, John xv. 5, and vi. 44. There is power in them to carry us still further out of God's way, but they are absolutely unable to move heavenward, till they be endowed with power from on high. Therefore we are to be concerned for the new nature, the principle of spiritual life.

*Secondly*, Faith in God through Jesus Christ. We must come to God before we can walk with him, it is by faith we come to him, Heb. xi. 6. We are naturally at a distance from God; in the everlasting covenant God offers to meet us in Christ. So by coming to Christ we meet with God, that we may set off in our way with him. Whoso would walk with God,

1. Must take God for their God in the covenant, Heb. viii. 10, renouncing all others for him, and accepting him as their God and portion, to walk with him as their covenanted God. The world bears great bulk in sinners' eyes naturally, but we must look over it and above it, to the God that made it, that we may take up our souls' everlasting rest in him. So did Enoch, while the rest were following vanities; he closed his eyes on them, and came to God as his soul's home.

2. They must embrace Christ in the offer of the gospel, seeing in him only we can meet with God. God out of Christ is a consuming fire; but vailed with the flesh of Christ, he is a refreshing sun. We cannot walk with an absolute God, more than dry fuel can lie before a consuming fire.

*Thirdly.* A state of reconciliation with God; Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Man naturally is in a state of enmity with God. And while that lasts, he can never walk with God dutifully to him, nor comfortably to himself. For in that state what we do can never be acceptable to God, nor can we look for comfort to ourselves by it; and hence Eliphaz advises, Job xxii. 21, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." Therefore we must be in a justified state, having our sins pardoned for the sake of Christ, and so in a state of peace through the great Peace-maker. When God and a sinner in a state of enmity meet, what can be expected but,

1. Angry looks? No wonder he turn his back on such; so that though they come to Jerusalem, they see not the King's face; Hos. v. 6, "They shall go—to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him, he hath withdrawn himself from them."

2. Angry words? God can speak so as to make the conscience hear, where there is no audible voice; Psalm l. 16, "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" That is a question that imports anger, upbraiding, accusing, and grief for the contempt put upon him. And O what a sad matter is it to have him angry with us in whose favour life lies; him to upbraid us, who does us all the good we get; him our accuser, who is our only intercessor; and him to be grieved with us, who only can make us glad?

3. Angry strokes? When enemies meet, no wonder there be blows a-dealing. Sometimes there are strokes on the body, 1 Cor. x. 1—6; strokes on the soul, Mal. i. *ult.* See how it was with the Israelites in the wilderness; Psalm cvi. 15, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." Wherefore let us labour to have God for our friend in Christ, that we may walk with him.

*Fourthly,* Conversion, or turning to God. We are naturally turned away from God, and therefore are called to return to him, Hos. xiv. 1. Our hearts are turned away from himself; our feet are turned away from his way. We must turn back again ere we can walk with him.

1. Our hearts must be brought off the world to God; Cant. iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." The first removing of the heart was from God to the creature, from the fountain to the muddy streams and broken cisterns, Jer. ii. 13. There men naturally seek their happiness, comfort, and satisfaction. But it must remove again, leave the bulky vanity, the fair deceitful nothing, and return to God. Our hearts must be lifted, our love, joy, delight, &c., off the creature, and set on God.

2. Our hearts must be brought from our lusts to the Lord, from our sins to our Saviour; we must say, "That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more," Job xxxiv. 32. That day the soul returns to the Lord, the idols will be cast to the bats and to the moles, Isa. ii. 20. For if God get the throne in the heart, they will get the cross. It was in this case God observed Ephraim, and was well pleased with him; Jer. xxxi. 18—20, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

3. We must be brought out of ourselves unto God; Matthew xvi. 24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Man turning off from God turned into himself, and made himself his chief end, acting from himself and to himself. So we are naturally hemmed in within the cursed circle of self, out of which we must be turned ere we can walk with God. And,

(1.) Out of our self-wisdom, put in the room of Christ as a prophet. For thus saith God to all that would walk with him, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye," Psalm xxxii. 8. Whoso would give up themselves to the Lord, must, as it were, put out their own eyes, resolving never more to guide themselves, that they may follow the Lord, as Abraham did, Heb. xi. 8, who, at God's call, went out, not knowing whither he went.

(2.) Out of our self-righteousness, put in the room of Christ as a priest. We must come up to duties, and then come over them, renouncing all confidence in them, laying no weight on them in the point of commending us to the favour of God. For what stress is laid on them that way, derogates from the honour of him on whom the Father has laid help, and is inconsistent with the character of the true circumcision, Phil. iii. 3. Otherwise we cannot walk with God in duties.

(3.) Out of our self-will and self-ability, put in the room of Christ as a king. Man is naturally wilful, and will have his own liking, and do what seems good in his own eyes. But in the day that one comes to walk with God, he gives up with his own will, saying, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." He gives it to be led as a captive after Christ's chariot wheels, so that he may draw it and drive over it, as seems good in his eyes, 2 Cor. x. 5.

Man also naturally goes into himself for strength wherewith to do commanded duty, being ignorant of Christ as the head of influences for sanctification. But in the day one comes to walk with God, he renounces his own stock as insufficient, and gives up himself to live by Christ, in the way of being daily supplied, John vi. 57. For then he sees the truth of that saying, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered," Prov. xxviii. 26.

Secondly, I shall consider walking with God in the matter of it, in respect of our frame and conversation. And indeed this duty goes as broad as the whole law. I must take it up in some particulars. If we would have the life of religion in our walk, we must not walk at random.

*First*, We must walk with God in the way of habitual eyeing of him in all things. It is the neck-break of many, that God is not in all their thoughts, and the ruin of religion among professors, that they forget God, though he is not far from any of us. The heart is like a common inn, so thronged with strangers, that the master is not noticed, but thrust out to make room for others. It was otherwise with David; Psalm xvi. 1, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

1. We must eye him as our witness in all things. Let us say everywhere as Hagar, Gen. xvi. 13, "Thou God seest me," Let us fix on our hearts awful apprehensions of his omniscience and omnipresence, as Psalm cxxxix. 7, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" There is a root of Atheism in our hearts that says, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not," Ezek. ix. 9. And O how ready are the best to forget,

though they are ever under the chalk of his eye, that he is a witness to every thought, word, and action! Thus walking with God implies,

(1.) The believing of his all-seeing eye, embracing it with a firm faith, that he is intimately acquainted with all our ways, Heb. iv. 13. His eye is on us where no other eye can see us, yea, where our own eyes cannot reach, that is, into our hearts. And where the true faith of this is, it will not want an impression of proportionable depth with the strength of the faith wherewith it is apprehended.

(2.) An habitual minding of this all-seeing eye that is on us, Psalm xvi. 8. Walkers with God are frequently sisting themselves in the presence of this God; and especially when the temptation comes, they look to him that sees them, and say, "Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

(3.) A suitable respect to this all-seeing eye, influencing our hearts, lips, and lives, to beware of sin, and to be diligent and upright in duty. The eyes of a child will restrain people sometimes; how much more should the eye of God that is never off us?

2. Eye him as our Judge, to whom at length we must give an account, Rom. xiv. 10. Let us remember and often have in our mind, that word which at length will reach our ears, "Rise ye dead, and come to judgment." We might walk as we list, if we were never to be called to account. But there is not a thought, word, or action, but what must be judged, Rom. ii. 16; Eccl. xii. *ult.* We can never say there is more than a step betwixt us and the judgment-seat, and therefore there is good reason we should walk as prisoners going to the bar.

(1.) Let us walk as under the eye of an infinitely holy Judge, who cannot look on sin but with abhorrence, Hab. i. 13. He can never be brought by any means to approve of sin, how little soever we think of it. The least spot is offensive to the eyes of his jealousy, and he cannot away with it.

(2.) Let us walk as under the eye of an accurate Judge, from whom no crime can be hid, whose eyes no pretences nor fair colours can deceive. Let us remember when we come there, our crimes cannot be hid for want of evidence; for the omniscient Judge himself is witness to all, and that omniscience will pierce through all the vails wherewith we now cloke our sins.

(3.) Let us walk as under the eye of an impartial Judge. He is one that cannot be biassed either by feud or favour. He is no respecter of persons, but rewards every one according to his work. The belief of this would make us impartial in our own cause; and if we were walking with God, we would sist our own cause without partiality.

3. Eye him as our Redeemer and Saviour; Isa. xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." To eye God as our witness and judge, without eyeing him as a God in Christ, atoned by his blood, would fright us away from him, so as we could never walk with him more. But that a guilty creature may walk with God, let him,

(1.) Eye the mercy of God in a Mediator; Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." That is a large covering under which may be hid all the guilt of our walk. It reaches deep and extends very far, Psalm lxxxvi. 13, "Great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." In our most accurate walking, and when we have done our utmost, there will be need of grace and mercy. And we must believingly apply to it, that when we have fallen, we may rise up again and walk.

(2.) Eye the righteousness of a Redeemer. Had the most close walker with God nothing to look to but the righteousness of his own works, he would never have ground of joy all the way through the wilderness. But the naughtiness of his own righteousness makes him look often to the imputed righteousness, and there he joys; Isa. xlv. 24, 25, "Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

(3.) Eye the conscience-purging blood, Heb. xii. 22, 24. If thou hast come up into Christ's chariot of the covenant, the covering of it is a covert of purple, that is ever over thy head. When conscience is wounded with guilt, it is like a thorn got into the foot of the traveller, who can walk no more till it be drawn out, Heb. ix. 14.

4. Eye him as the fountain of strength, Isa. xlv. 24, forecited. This is the way that David resolved to walk with God, Psalm lxxi. 16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." The way we have to go is difficult, we have little strength, and there is much opposition; we need to keep our eye on him in whom the believer's strength lies, Psalm lxxxiv. 5. None walk with God but those that draw strength from him, for the whole of their walk. And that lies in two things.

(1.) Believing the promise of strength and furniture, for whatever piece of the way we are called to go through, Psalm cxvi. 9, 10, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken." The spiritual traveller has many a difficult step in his way to Immanuel's land, but in the covenant there is

strength promised to carry him through them all. He must keep his eye on the promise, and firmly believe it, for that is the way to suck the breasts of these consolations.

(2.) Using the means on the credit of the promise. God's institutions have promises annexed to them, and they become effectual, being thus believingly used; Heb. iv. 2, compare John xvii. 17. To pretend to believe without the use of means, is presumption; to use the means without believing the promise, is lifeless formality. Is there a lust to mortify, or a temptation to resist? let us use the means, and believe the promise of sanctification with close application to ourselves.

5. Eye him as our Master, Lord, head, and husband; Psalm xlv. 11, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." See how the spouse comes out of the wilderness walking with God, even leaning on him as her Head and Husband; Cant. viii. 5. We must walk with him, as obedient servants with a master, dutiful subjects with a king, &c. Whomsoever others serve, let it be our resolution to serve the Lord; Josh. xxiv. 15. And this imports, that we must be ready,

(1.) To receive his orders, and the least indications of his mind to comply with them, signified to us by his word or providence. How closely did the psalmist thus walk with God? Psalm cxxiii. 2, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us." And this is the duty of all pretending to be espoused to Christ. So that it must needs be great untenderness, that "God speaks once, yea, twice, yet men regard it not."

(2.) To do his bidding; "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" said Paul; Acts ix. 6. Our Lord lets us see, that it is not talking of, but thus walking with God, that is religion indeed; Luke vi. 46, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" And it is not the hearers, but the doers of the word that shall be justified. There is no walking with God, if we walk not in the road of obedience to his commands. If we take our own way, we walk not with him, but Satan.

(3.) To be careful to please him in all things; 1 Cor. vii. 34, to give content to the heart of Christ in whatever we do; Col. i. 10, not only to do the thing he commands, but to do it to his mind, so as he may take pleasure in us, and delight to do us good. For thus the duty of Christ's spouse in walking with God is summed up; Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

6. *Lastly.* Eye him as our chief end. As he that walks with God

sets off in his way in him and by him, so he walks to him as the great end of his walk; Psalm xvi. 8, "I have set the Lord always before me." Rom. xi. *ult.*, "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." This implies two things,

(1.) Aiming at his glory in all things; 1 Cor. x. 31. We must make that the great scope of all our actions, and of our whole life. He that walks with God displaces self, which is the dead sea into which all our actions naturally run, and sets up the honour of God instead thereof; reckoning his life no more useful in the world than it tends to the honour of God. For we are as trees in a vineyard, of no use, but as they bring forth fruit to their master's use; Luke xiii. 7.

(2.) Seeking to enjoy him as our chief happiness; Psalm lxxiii. 25. Man can never be self-sufficient, (no not angels); that is the peculiar prerogative of God, whose perfections are infinite. So he must needs seek his happiness without himself. While he is without God in a natural state, he seeks it in the creatures; when he comes to God, he takes God for it. And walking with God, he habitually seeks it in the enjoyment of him, and feeds at that table he sits down to in conversion. And so if ye would walk with God,

(1.) Ye must seek to enjoy him in all things, in the measure he is to be enjoyed here; Psalm xxvii. 4; seek to enjoy him in ordinances; Psalm lxiii. 1, 2, public, private, and secret. Ye must not stay in the shell, nor in the outer court; but seek to believe, taste, and feel; Psalm xxxiv. 8. Ye must seek him in providences; Psalm xciv. 4, merciful and favourable, smiling and frowning. He will be the sap and foyson of mercies to the walker with God; Gen. xxxiii. 10, and they will see his name in cross dispensations; Micah vi. 9.

(2.) Ye must seek to enjoy him in heaven hereafter. If ye walk through the world with God, ye will walk as pilgrims bound for another and better country, keeping that in your view as your only rest; Heb. xi. 13, 16. He that walks with God, walks as one living that he may die well, making it the business of this life that he may learn to die, and to get beyond it to a better life.

*Secondly.* We must walk with God in the way of the heart's going along with him in all things, as the shadow goes with the body. Hence it is called "walking after the Lord;" Hos. xi. 10, "following the Lord;" Numb. xiv. 24. Walking with God is no bodily motion, but a spiritual motion, a moving of the heart and affections; and so it must import necessarily the heart's going along with him. I will take it up in these three things. If ye would walk with God, your hearts must go along with him,

1. In the way of believing in all things. Thus Enoch walked with God; Heb. xi. 5. God is a Spirit, and our souls are spirits. The way of communion betwixt God and us is in the way of believing, for we cannot know him to our salvation, but as he has revealed himself to us in his word. So God manifesting himself by his word, we cannot walk with him, but as our hearts go along with these manifestations of himself, in the way of believing; hence is that account the apostle gives us of his walk; Gal. ii. 20, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." So walking with God imports,

(1.) Believing his commands. Faith discerns the stamp of divine authority on the commands, and so gives them a suitable weight on one's own spirit. It esteems and judges them all right and reasonable; Psalm cxix. 128. So they are believed to be not only from God, but suited to the divine perfections, and to man's real welfare. Which cannot miss to influence the person to obedience.

(2.) Believing his promises, the promises of the gospel; Heb. xi. 13. He that walks with God, does not only believe the great leading promises of the covenant, of God himself's being their God, and of eternal salvation, but the lesser promises depending on these. And while others take other things for their heritage, they take the promises for theirs; Psalm cxix. 111. So the great thing that sways them in their course of life, is the prospect of unseen things; (2 Cor. iv. 18,) to be had in another world, and likewise the prospect of what is promised even in this life.

So the promises are apt to influence obedience; and when they do, that is walking with God; when one ventures on, and follows the way of duty on the credit of the promise; *e.g.* giving out of their substance at God's call, upon the faith of the promise; Prov. iii. 9, 10, &c.

(3.) Believing his threatenings; Heb. xi. 7. We find holy men have thus walked with God, being influenced to a tender holy walk by the faith of God's threatenings in his word; Job xxxii. *ult.* David was not of a servile legal spirit, when he says, Psalm cxix. 120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." Hence they that walk with God, will not venture on an ill thing, more than they would take fire into their bosom, because the terror of God makes them afraid of sin.

2. In the way of compliance with his holy will. If we do not thus in all things, we walk contrary to him. When man fell off from God, his own will became his law, and was set in opposition to

the will of God. When he returns to God, his will is inclined by grace to God's will; and walking with God it goes along therewith, complying with it in all things. So walking with God imports,

(1.) Complying with the will of his command in all things; Acts ix. 6. The heart of the believer is reconciled to, and approves of the law as holy, just, and good; and while he walks with God, he labours sincerely to suit his walk thereunto in all things, being grieved at any reluctancy that is in the heart against any piece of obedience, crying with David, Psalm cxix. 5, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

(2.) Complying with the will of his providence, the heart being reconciled to that lot which God is pleased to carve out; Psalm xlvii. 4. O what walking contrary to God is there in this respect, while the proud unhumbled heart will not, cannot accommodate itself to divine dispensations! but murmurs, frets, and repines, and rebels against the Lord, as the sovereign Governor of the world.

3. In the way of habitual moving of the heart towards him. Grace has an attractive virtue in the heart drawing it towards God. And when it is in exercise, it will make the heart to be moving towards him, whereas otherwise it settles on other things besides him. So in walking with God there is,

(1.) Frequent thinking and meditating on him, Mal. iii. 16. That is a black character of the wicked; Psalm x. 4, "God is not in all his thoughts." And the saint is in a backgoing condition that begins to forget him; Jer. ii. 32. Yea, fleeting thoughts are not sufficient; if we walk with God, he will be the subject of our meditation, both occasional and stated; Psalm lxiii. 6. If we walk with a man, he is ever in our view, and so we cannot miss to think on him.

(2.) Habitual moving of the heart towards him, in love, desire, trust, &c. He is the chief good and the best of beings, which should ever command our love, Deut. vi. 5. That is the holy fire that is kept glowing and flaming in the heart of one that walks with God, loving him for himself, and for his goodness to us. Desires after him are the breathings of a soul touched with the love of God, tending to perfect enjoyment. And the continual wants and weakness that such a one finds himself compassed with, turn him very naturally to trust and dependence on him.

(3.) Frequent use of ejaculatory prayer, 1 Thes. v. 17. This is that kind of prayer to which we have access at all times, the darting up of a desire to the Lord, whatever be the lawful business we are about, or whatever be our case. And hardly can people be thought to walk with God, that are not frequently sending

these swift, though silent, messengers to heaven. We find Jacob, in the midst of his testament, using such a devout ejaculation; Gen. xlix. 18, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." See Moses's practice, Exod. xiv. 15, and Nehemiah's, before he answered a king, Neh. ii. 4.

*Thirdly*, We must walk with God in ordinances, Luke i. 6, submitting to, and seeking communion with God in all ordinances as we have access. The ordinances are the banqueting-house of Christ wherein he feasts his people, Cant. ii. 4, the galleries wherein the king is held by those that walk with him there, Cant. vii. 5. Particularly the communion with God is to be sought and kept up,

1. In secret prayer, Matth. vi. 6. We must walk with God in a due and ordinary observance of that kind of prayer. It is a duty wherein the people of God have had as much communion with God as in any other; witness Jacob's experience, Gen. xxxii. 24, and Daniel's, chap. ix. 22. The Lord promises his people a particular familiarity with him in that duty; Cant. vii. 11, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages." And however some may be blythe to get it shifted, yet the truly-exercised would find it hard, nay, they could not at all live without it. And how people can walk with God, taking it only now and then, and not making conscience of ordinary observing of it, I see not. And indeed people will readily know by their disposition in secret prayer, whether they be in a thriving case or not.

2. In family prayer, Acts x. 2, 3. Never one that gives Christ heart-room, but they will be willing to give him house-room too. And there are none that walk with God themselves, but they would fain all their family walked with God too, Josh xxiv. 15. And there are none who have gone about it seriously, but must say, that family worship is an ordinance in which God is to be found. Prayerless families are in a dangerous condition; they are as if the owners should uncover the roofs of them, that wrath may be showered down on them; Jer. x. *ult.*, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name." And I think if people were walking with God in family-duties, they would not lay by the morning-exercise, as many of you do. And what is it that hinders it? What but the weary world? Ye cannot get time for it, because of your business. But are ye not afraid of God's curse on that business that shuts out his worship? And if it should thrive, ye take the way to get leanness to your souls. It looks not like walking with God to stand off from family worship, till they have no other thing ado, and it is a graceless-like thing to offer only that time to God that costs you nothing.

3. In reading of the word, John v. 39. We find the truly-godly have been great lovers of the Bible. O how does David commend it, especially in the 119th psalm, though it was but a small part of it that was written in his time. One that would walk with God, should even walk through the Bible, reading it, and acquainting themselves with the mind of God in it. And ye will see, that whenever persons come to be in earnest exercised about their case, they will very naturally go to their Bibles in quite another manner than they used to do.

4. In extraordinary prayer, setting time apart for it, either in secret, or in families; of which I have spoken before.*

5. In hearing the word. Whenever the Lord puts an occasion of hearing the word in your hand, he says in effect, Come walk with me in the galleries; and "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," Isa. xii. 3. And every believing soul will reply with David, Psalm lxv. 4, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." The Sabbath-day is a day of blessing, the preaching of the gospel is the great means for the salvation of sinners, 1 Cor. i. 21. Is it not then a slighting of communion with God, for people to idle away so many Sabbaths at home, in making so little conscience of attending on public ordinances? Read through the whole Bible, and ye will not find a gracious person but was much addicted to the place where his honour dwells, to public ordinances. And I assure you, the godly in some places would wonder if they could have any good in them at all, that can contentedly sit at home, when they are neither sick nor sore, nor have any providential necessity put upon them. It is very observable, Numb. ix. 10—13, "that if any man of Israel, or of their posterity should be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he should keep the passover unto the Lord:—but the man that was clean, and was not in a journey, and forebore to keep the passover; even the same soul should be cut off from his people, because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season." Whence observe, that as those who against their wills are forced to be absent from God's ordinances, may expect the favours of his grace under their affliction; so those who of choice absent themselves, may expect the tokens of his wrath for their sin.

6. *Lastly.* In the sacrament of the Lord's supper. That is an ordinance especially appointed for communion with God; 1 Cor. x. 16.

* See Memorial concerning personal and family fasting, annexed to the author's View of the Covenant of Grace.

And it has been so in the experience of many souls. Wherefore it must be strange how those can walk with God, that never set their foot on that holy ground, though they have one opportunity after another.

And if ye would walk with God in these duties, (1.) Ye must make conscience of preparation, even prepare for secret prayer, &c. (2.) Seek and press forward for communion with God in these ordinances, and take not up with the external work. (3.) Do not take them by starts, but keep an ordinary, as ye have occasion, otherwise ye cannot be said to walk with God in them.

Fourthly. We must walk with God in providences. These are his ways wherein he walks towards us, and we must walk with him in them; Hos. xiv. *ult.*, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." Sometimes he goes with us in the way of smiling, sometimes of cross providences; but whether he take the high road of lifting up, or the low one of downcasting, we are to follow, and walk with him. This lies in these seven things,

1. We must notice his hand in all that we meet with from any hand whatsoever. God guides the world by wisdom, and without him second causes cannot move; Ezek. i. 20. Whether thou meet with a mercy or a cross, say in thine heart, This is the finger of God; Gen. xxxiii. 10. The not noticing of this is a spice of atheism, that God is highly displeased with; Psalm xxviii. 5, "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." See how the Pagan Chaldeans do with smiling providences; Hab. i. 16, "They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous." And see what the Philistines say of their afflictions, "It is a chance." But he that walketh with God, takes all out of the Lord's hand.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the aspect of providence, whether it be shining or louring; Eccl. vii. 14. For without this we shew a contempt of providence, which the Lord takes heinously, as you may see by looking to Isa. xxii. 12—14. We must rejoice in his mercies, and walk soberly and concernedly under the strokes of his hand.

3. We must labour to find out the design of providence. Providence has a voice, and it is a voice of speech which may be understood; Ezek. i. 24. The works of providence are a book which the walker with God labours to read the mind of God in. Merciful dispensations are preachers of repentance, and happy are they that

hear their voice; Rom. ii. 4. Cross dispensations have a language to the same purpose; Micah vi. 9, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

To help you to know the particular design of providence in cross dispensations that ye meet with.

(1.) Pray in faith for it, believing that God will discover it to you in the use of means, in his own time; Job x. 2, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." Compare Matth. xxi. 22, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." But take good heed that your souls be truly and honestly laid open to divine instruction, that you be disposed to know it at any rate, though it should touch you in a most sensible part; Psalm xxv. 9, "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way."

(2.) Search for it, as the Israelites did for the accursed thing; Psalm lxxvii. 6. Think upon it, in order to find it out. Take a view of your way, what it was before and at the time when ye met with the cross; even as when men have lost any thing, they go back till they come to the place where they are sure they had it.

(3.) Take help of the word in this matter. Consider scripture-threatenings, or examples, that may be apposite to your case. All that you or I meet with is but a fulfilling of the scripture; Hos. vii. 12. And as providence gives light to the word, so the word gives light to providence. And thus Moses opened up the meaning of a dark providence to Aaron from the word; Lev. x. 3, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace."

(4.) Listen to the whispers of conscience under the rod. The sin that under the rod conscience casts most in thy teeth, is very likely to be the sin that God is aiming at, as in the case of Joseph's brethren; Gen. xlii. 21, who "said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Even as the man that has a sore finger, whatever touches his hand, the finger smarts; an evidence that there his sore lies.

(5.) Consider what sin it is that thou hast had most reproofs for from the word, most checks for by some lesser steps of providence, most challenges for from conscience, and yet thou hast not reformed. That is likely to be it. For God's rods follow his rebukes, as Absalom did with Joab: Jer. xxii. 21, 22, "I spake unto thee in thy

prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear; this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyest not my voice. The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into captivity, surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness."

6. *Lastly.* Consider the nature of the stroke or cross, for very readily there is a discernable affinity betwixt sin and the stroke. Sometimes God punishes men in the same kind with their sin, as in the case of Adonibezek; Judg. i. 7. Sometimes in the occasion of their sins, as Eli's indulgence to his children was punished by the death of them. Sometimes their punishment is in what is most contrary to their sin, as David's sin in numbering of the people. Sometimes God measures to us in temporals, as we do to him in spirituals; Hos. iv. 12, 13; 1 Cor. xi. 30, and several other ways.

One that walks with God will have so much ado with these things, that they should very carefully observe them, for daily practice of taking up God's mind in what they meet with.

4. We must endeavour to comply with the designs of providence; Job xxxvi. 10, 11. Providences in favourable dispensations are God's cords of love and bands of a man, whereby he draws sinners to himself. In afflicting dispensations they are God's furnace for melting of souls, that they may take on suitable impressions. And O but it is sad when the effect of all is that; Hos. xi. 2, "As they called them, so they went from them." Jer. vi. 29, 30, "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." That is a grievous complaint; Jer. v. 3, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." But he that walketh with God makes it his business to comply with the dispensations of providence in the design of them, to serve the Lord more cheerfully that God is kind to him, and to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness under afflictions.

5. We must notice the harmony of providences with the word; Psalm xlviii. 8, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts." This is the way to get communion with God in providences. And a sweet feast they often afford to those that are thus exercised to discern them; hence, says David; Psalm xcii. 4, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work. I will triumph in the works of thy hands?" and said Jacob to his brother Esau; Gen. xxxiii. 10, "Therefore have I seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me." The

word is the scheme and draught of the government of the world; and the lines of providence are all drawn accordingly. So that whatsoever thou meetest with, it is an accomplishment of scripture-promises, threatenings and doctrines. And a child of God in applying them thus to the rule, may have sweet communion with God.

6. We must follow the conduct of providence in subserviency to the word, keeping our eye on the promise; Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." To separate providence from the word, and then make it a rule, is dangerous; Jonah i. 3. But to follow the conduct of it with an eye to the word, is a notable part of the Christian's walking with God. Providence is the hand of the Lord whereby he opens the way in the wilderness to his people, that they may follow him. And go where they will, as long as they can thus keep their eye on their guide, they may judge themselves in the safest way.

7. *Lastly.* We must live in the exercise of the graces suitable to the dispensations of providence wherewith we are trysted; Eccl. vii. 14. Some dispensations are sweet and comfortable; let us by them be stirred up to love the Lord the more; Psalm cxvi. 1. Let any comfort that we find in the creature be used to enlarge our hearts in thankfulness to, desire of, and cheerfulness in serving the Lord. Some are heavy, and require patience; some dark and doubtful, and require faith. Some take away our created supports, and dry up our cisterns, and put out our candle; and such require trust in the Lord, and to rejoice in him; Hab. iii. 17, 18. Thus he that walks with God, follows him whithersoever he goes.

Fifthly, We must walk with God in the stations and relations wherein he hath placed us. These are the sphere that God hath given us to move in, in the world. And whoso walks not with God in them, will never please him. There are two pieces of work which a Christian has to do.

1. One for himself, and that is his salvation-work; Phil. ii. 12. That is, to secure his eternal welfare in the enjoyment of God, so to make sure his gracious state, to maintain a gracious frame and disposition, by getting incident controversies betwixt God and his soul done away, grace actuated, strengthened, and nourished, till he come to the stature of a perfect man in Christ. This lies in his personal walk.

2. One for God, and that is his generation-work; Acts xiii. 36. This lies in his relative walk. Whence we may conclude, that so far as a man or woman is defective in their relative duties, so far they are useless for God, and take up room in the world for no pur-

pose. And so far as they do ill instead of good in their relations, they walk contrary to God. We see how the Lord in the works of nature has joined together the creatures, the sun to shine by day, and the moon by night, the beasts to serve man, and the earth with the products thereof to serve both. The beauty of the world lies in every one's keeping their place, and being serviceable in the place wherein God has set them. And so relations are the joints of society; and they that would walk with God, must walk with him in them.

(1.) We must labour faithfully to discharge the duties of our stations and relations, as under the eye of God, who is our common Overseer, Witness, and Judge; Psalm ci. 2. God has shaped out our work to us, whether in the church, commonwealth, or family, wherein some are as eyes, some as hands, and some as feet. Though the work of others may be higher and more honourable than ours, our greatest honour will be to approve ourselves to God in our own part. God observes how every one does his duty, the husband, the wife, the master, the servant. And they that walk with God, will behave themselves in these things as under the eye of God, as well as when they are at prayers; &c. Col. iii. 22.

(2.) We must do the duties of our relations under a sense of the command of God. It is not enough that the husband love his wife, or the wife submit herself to her husband, &c., if conscience of duty towards God do not sway them thereto; Eph. v. 21. We must make God our great party in all these things, otherwise we do not walk with God in them. There is no relation one stands in, but God has set them their duty; and so the performance of these duties is as much the trial of our obedience, as the most religious actions we are capable of.

(3.) We must do the duties of our relations with an eye to the real good of our relatives. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the sum of the second table. No man is born for himself, but to be serviceable to God and his fellow-creatures; Rom. xv. 2. And the more useful we are to others, the more we serve God, and the more we are like him; for he does good unto all, even unto the unholy and unthankful.

(4.) *Lastly.* We must do the duties of our relations with an eye to the honour of God; 1 Cor. x. 31. O the dishonour that is done to God by the little conscience that is made of relative duties, by crying relative sins. Should the fabric of the world run into confusion, sun, moon, stars, day and night, go out of their courses, where were the honour of God arising from the beauty of an orderly management of the world? But ah! how often are the foundations in churches,

states, and families out of course, and there nothing but disorder and confusion, contention and opposition, every one going out of their course; and so the honour of God, and their own good and comfort lying buried in the ruinous heap? This is walking contrary to God.

This walking with God is particularly noticed concerning Enoch; Gen. v. 22, "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." He walked with God in his family, as a father and a husband, in the married state. So if thou be a walker with God, it will appear in the relations wherein thou standest; for grace makes a good husband, a good wife, a good master, a good servant, &c. And the duties of relations will readily try both the reality and strength of grace.

SIXTHLY, We must walk with God in all our actions, whether natural, civil, or religious; 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Religion is to our conversation like salt to meat, necessary to season our whole life, whatever it is that we are about.

*First*, We must walk with God in our natural actions, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, &c. These are common to us with the beasts; but we must not be like the beasts in the use of them, but walk with God therein. Now, if we would walk with God in these things,

1. We must do them under a sense of the command of God. Eating and drinking, &c., are duties of the sixth command; and therefore we ought to do them because God has said, "Thou shalt not kill." Wherever there is a divine ordinance respecting any natural action, we ought therein to have respect to that ordinance; 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Our bodies are the Lord's, and he binds us by all lawful means to preserve them; and then do men walk with God in these things, while they patch up the mud-wall house under the sense of the command of the owner.

2. We must depend on the Lord for benefit by them; 1 Tim. iv. 5. Without the blessing on the means, the end cannot be obtained. Without God our meat cannot nourish us, nor our clothes warm us; so that the emptiness of the creature points us to God at every turn, agreeable to what our Lord says; Matth. iv. 4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is no less than spiritual idolatry to overlook the Lord, and look for the benefit from the creature itself; Jer. xvii. 5; Hos. iv. 10. If he would say the word, we might eat and not be filled, sleep and not be refreshed. So that even in these we are called to

walk by faith with God, looking for the benefit of God's ordinance and appointment about these things.

3. We must use them for God and his service; as the traveller takes his staff in his hand, not to be a burden or a carriage to him, but to help him on his journey. While the soul is in the body, it has a mighty dependence thereon; and so it is as the horse that must be cared for, to the end we may accomplish the journey; 2 Kings iii. 15. So walking with God in these things, would make us use them so, as may most fit us for the work of our Christian calling, having that as our great scope before our eye.

4. We must keep a holy Christian moderation in these things; Phil. iv. 5. We must be like Gideon's lappers, even when waters of a full cup are set before us. People may easily fall into a sinful eagerness in these things; Gen. xxv. 30, and sink their hearts into these things, wherein they should only lightly go along with wariness; Luke xxi. 31, regulating ourselves in the use of them, by what is best to fit us for our salvation and generation-work, which is the true rule of moderation. For the heart must not sit down on them as its end and rest; but pass through them as a means and way; 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

5. We must ascend by the creature unto the Creator, from creature-sweetness to that infinite fulness that is in God; Zech. ix. *ult.*, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." Seeing all perfection in the creature is originally from God, it must be in him, and that infinitely. If there be any thing desirable in the streams, it must be more so in the fountain. If the light of the sun be so pleasant to the eyes, he who is light itself must be infinitely more so. Whatever pleasure or delight we find in meat, drink, &c. it points us to God, from whom that sweetness is derived, as drops from the ocean.

6. We must look on them as covenant mercies, and the fulfilment of promises; Deut. xxvi. 3, &c. God has secured our necessary comforts by promise; Isa. xxxiii. 16. "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." Psalm cxxvii. 2, and lxxxiv. 11. So when we receive them, we should look on them as such; and then however coarse the meat be, being served up in the dish, not of common providence, but of the covenant, it will have an uncommon sweetness, and we will have communion with God in that which others find no more in than beasts do.

7. *Lastly.* We must be thankful for all our mercies, unto God as the giver; 1 Thess. v. 18. We must pay to him verbal acknowledgements; Hos. xiv. 2; Deut. viii. 10, and real acknowledgements,

serving him in the strength of our mercies, and that cheerfully, as he deals graciously with us in these things. What we have from him must be used for him; Rom. xi. *ult.*; and the more liberally he deals with us, the more cheerfully ought we to serve him; Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.

*Secondly.* We must walk with God in our civil actions, such as are competent to men in society, as trading, buying, selling, working, and in a word, managing our worldly business: that as we may not act like beasts in the former, so we may not act as men that know not God in the latter. Now, if we would walk with God in managing of our temporal affairs,

1. We must act in these matters as under a sense of a command or appointment of God in them. God has given each his calling, station, and work; and we are to act therein suitably in obedience to him; 1 Cor. vii. 24, doing our proper business as to the Lord, who is our great Master; Eph. vi. 7. Thus a man should go about his worldly business, whether for his own or another's advantage because God has said, "Thou shalt not steal;" looking on it as a piece of his duty to God.

2. We must depend on him by faith, for direction in our business; Prov. iii. 6. We must pray for it, and trust God for it. Temporal affairs are not excepted; Phil. iv. 6, "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Whence is a dexterity and skill to manage a temporal business, to do a piece of work to purpose without or within doors? Is it not from the Lord? Jam. i. 17, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above." Isa. xxviii. 26, "For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him." Common influences of the Spirit are as necessary to the exercise of a gift, as saving influences are to the exercise of grace. Remember the error the princes of Israel fell into; Josh. ix. 14, "The men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord;" and Lot's unhappy choice, wherein he did not own God; Gen. xiii. 11, 12.

3. We must depend on the Lord by faith, for the success of our lawful endeavours; Psalm cxxvii. 1. Whatever men undertake with an eye to God in it, they may depend on him for the success of it; Psalm i. 3. An unsanctified confidence of success God often blasts, that he may let all men see in every thing, that "by strength no man shall prevail;" 1 Sam. ii. 9, and that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;" Eccl. ix. 11. And while people torment themselves with anxiety as to events, he brings their fears ofttimes on them, and lets them see, that by taking thought no man can add a cubit to his stature.

4. We must cut and carve in them as may be most for the honour of God and our soul's welfare. This is the great mark that we would always keep in view, and according to which we must steer our course. Our eternal interest is our greatest, and all other interests must vail to it. The honour of God is the sheaf to which all others must bow; and the balance is to be cast on that side always on which these are; Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Where is the gain where the foot is lost to save the shoe? The world, with whom gain is godliness, and a penny more or less determines them in their affairs, would have thought Moses a foolish man for missing a good bargain; Heb. xi. 24. But he acted even as wisely, as a man who cares not for gaining that pound, in gaining which he must lose a talent. Therefore consider in your worldly affairs, what will be best for your souls.

5. We must deal with men as under the eye of God, a holy jealous God, whether we be masters, servants, neighbours, &c. Eph. v. 15. Be strict and precise observers of common justice, according to the golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Whatever occasions you have to do an unjust thing, let the eye of God be a sufficient restraint; Job xxxi. 21—23. Let men pretend to what strictness they will otherwise, while they are not strict in their morals this way, they do more ill to religion, than perhaps they will ever be capable to do good.

6. We must observe Christian moderation in these things; 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Do not give yourselves wholly to them, to relish nothing but what savours of them, as those of Solomon did; Luke xvii. 28. Let them not steal away your heart, and justle out religion, like those mentioned, Luke xiv. 16, &c., but remember still you have greater business in hand than that; and therefore dip no farther into them, than you may do with safety to your soul's case.

7. *Lastly.* We must be suitably affected with the providence of God in these things; ascribing the success of our affairs to the Lord, and giving him thanks for blessing the work of our hands; acknowledging disappointments and crosses in them to come from the same hand; taking them kindly as trials wherewith the Lord sees meet to exercise us, and labouring to know and comply with the design of them.

*Thirdly,* We must walk with God in our religious actions, and so distinguish ourselves from hypocrites, who do the things, pray, hear, &c., but do not walk with God in them. Now, if we would walk with God in religious duties,

1. We must do our duty out of respect to the command of God; Psalm cxix. 4. We must say in this case, as Simon did in another; Luke v. 5, "At thy word I will let down the net." When people are led to duties from a custom, or some such low principles or motives, they do not walk with God in them. He that walks with God in them, discerns the stamp of divine authority on every duty, and that awes his heart into a compliance therewith.

2. We must seek the honour of God in all we do; John viii. 50. And indeed if we be let into a view of his glory in duties, the advancing of it will be our great aim. If thou be in duty with others, let God himself be your scope, and take heed of parting the glory betwixt him and thyself. If thou be alone, seek to give him the glory of all his perfections, by acknowledging of, and carrying as under the impression of, the same.

3. We must go about our duty in his own strength; Zech. x. *ult.*; Psalm lxxi. 16, renouncing all confidence in ourselves; 2 Cor. iii. 5. No gifts are to be trusted to in this, for they may soon be blasted, and no bare gift can make one act graciously. Nay, habitual grace is not to be trusted to for that end; for the fire not blown cannot give us light. Actual grace needs still to be preserved and fed, else it will fail. Therefore we must lean on the Lord himself for it; Isa. xlv. 24. And we must stretch out the withered hand in duty, in hopes of influences from him, and set to sea in confidence of the blowings of the Spirit.

4. We must be spiritual in our duties; John iv. 24; Phil. iii. 3. One that walks with God will not take up with bodily exercise, or lip-labour; but endeavour after inward worship, which is the work of the heart. This lies in loving, fearing, trusting, desiring, humbling of the heart before him; believing his word, &c. And so he will reckon no more to be done in worship of God, than what is done with the heart.

5. We must seek to enjoy God in duties, and not be satisfied without it; Psalm xxvii. 4. When thou comest to the galleries, let thine aim be to see the King in his glory. And let not the empty chair of state satisfy thy soul; for nothing is sufficient for the soul, but the enjoyment of God himself; Psalm lxxiii. 25. And if this be thine aim, thou wilt pursue it, and thurst forward till thou come even to his seat.

6. We must carry in duties as under the eye of God, in a special manner; Psalm lxxxix. 7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." That looseness of heart, whereby it wanders here and there at duty, proceeds from the want of a due fear of God

upon the soul; and is most contrary to walking with God; Jer. xii. 2, "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." The fixing of the heart under the impressions of his awful presence, that so the soul may carry suitably before him, is to sanctify the Lord in our heart; Lev. x. 3.

7. We must be frequent in duties; 1 Thess. v. 17. They that walk with God are frequent in solemn duties; but in the interval of these they will be taken up with others of a less solemn nature, such as thinking, meditation on God, ejaculations, &c. And thus they will be readily kept in tune for the return of the more solemn duties. And indeed people then cease to walk with God, when they begin to be more remiss and infrequent in solemn duties, and to be less careful of the frame of their hearts in the interval.

8. We must let new occurrences send us to our duty. This has been the practice of walkers with God, that whatever they have met with remarkable, it sent them to God? and "therefore," says the prophet, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me;" Micah vii. 7. And where can a gracious heart have such a vent, as before the Lord, whatever it be full of, whether joy or grief?

9. *Lastly.* We must observe the fruit of our duties; Psalm v. 3, carefully notice what speed we come in our applications to the throne; and what effect God's speaking upon his throne has upon us. This is communion with God, to be sending word to, and receiving word from heaven; to be importing something thither in duties and the exercise of grace, and to be exporting something thence for the spiritual enriching of the soul.

THIRDLY, I shall consider walking with God in the properties thereof. Walking with God is religion; and it is,

1. Practical religion, religion in deed, not in word only; and there is no other sort of religion that will bring us to heaven; hence says our Lord; John xiii. 17, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Talk as we will, if we do not walk with God, we are naught. Jacob dissembling with his father was the lively emblem of a hypocrite, the voice Jacob's, the hands Esau's. There is a great difference betwixt saying and doing in religion. The former is easy, the latter is difficult.

(1.) One may talk well of God and the things of God, and yet have nothing of the truth of religion. He may have a clear head in matters of religion, that has a dark heart; he may have a ready tongue to speak of them, whose feet are shackled with divers lusts, that he cannot walk in the way he speaks of; 1 Cor. xiii. 2. How many are ready in the history of the Bible, that are strangers to the

mystery of practical godliness? It is said of Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, that people were chained to her rather by the ear than by the eyes. So many, if ye hear them speak, they are something; but if ye look to their life, they are naught.

(2.) One may talk well for God, and yet have nothing of the truth of religion. But though they talk for him, they walk contrary to him. A man may preach for God, and teach others the way, that yet he never sets his foot on himself; Matth. xxiii. 4. Being like a boatman that ferries others over the water, but still with his own back towards the shore. Both ministers and professors may contend zealously for the faith of doctrine, while they are utter strangers to the life of faith; like a physician prescribing remedies to others, while himself is dying of his disease, without applying of proper remedies.

(3.) One may talk well to God, that yet never walks with him. Many speak fair to the Lord, whose walk is ever foul, never cleansed; as in Israel's case; Deut. v. 27, 29. Fair professions, resolutions, promises, are often seen going up as dust. Look to their words, they are like Naphthali giving goodly words, but still as Rachel, though beautiful yet barren; Matth. vii. 21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But religion being a practical thing, let no man think he has begun to be religious, till he come to practice; Jam. ii. 16, 17.—"faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone."

2. It is inward and heart religion; 1 Pet. iii. 4. They that have no religion but what is visible to the world, have no true religion; for God is the invisible God, and walking with him must be so too; Rom. ii 28, 29, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." It may be very hard to make any difference betwixt the life of a hypocrite and a sincere person; when the thread of hypocrisy is fine spun, it may pass the skill of the best discerner to discover it. And therefore one that walks with God, has a view beyond what he can see in others, or others can see in him. Ye must distinguish betwixt two things in religion.

(1.) The shell of it; and that is all you can see of my religion, or I of yours. This shell is religious bodily exercise, preaching, praying, works of piety, justice, mercy, and charity; 1 Tim iv. 8. These things are not very frequent in the world; but at the great day many of them will be found like deaf nuts, which being cracked and their inside discovered, are cast into the fire.

(2.) The kernel of it; and that is what none can see but God and their own consciences that have it; and that is soul-exercise, heart-work; 1 Tim. iv. 7; Acts xxiv. 16. That only is godliness, and not the other. Preaching and praying, though it were with tears and the greatest seeming seriousness, is not godliness; it is the faith, fear, love, humiliation of heart, hatred of sin, resignation to the will of God, and conformity of the heart to his mind, which is in the preaching or prayer, that is religion in God's account. It is not the works of piety, &c., themselves, but the love to God for his own sake, and love to our neighbour for his, the holiness of the principle, manner, motives, ends that is in these works, that is religion. The bodily exercise is but the vehicle, in which these sacred drops are taken.

Let no man deceive himself. No kernel grows without a shell, and none can have the power of godliness without the form of it; but there is many a shell without a kernel, and much form where there is nothing of the power.

3. It is heavenly religion; Phil. iii. 20. According to men's state and their nature, so will their actions be; for as is the tree, so will the fruit be. The heart of man, according as grace or corruption reigns in it, will tincture every thing that comes through it. Hence a natural man's very religion is carnal and earthly; Jam. iii. 15. His best things in religion smell of the earth. If a gale blow at any time on his soul, it rises low; if he sorrow for sin, it is the sorrow of the world; if he offer fire, it is strange fire. On the other hand, religion tinctures the very natural actions of one that walks with God; for this is a walking as one of another world.

Walking with God is indeed walking like one of the other world, namely, the upper world. The man conforms no more to the way of this world; Rom. xii. 2, keeps no more its course; Eph. ii. 2, but is coming through it as a pilgrim, and coming out of it; Cant. iv. 8. And,

(1.) His root in this lower world is loosed, that he may be in due time transplanted into the upper world. The believer is no more one of the "world's own;" John xv. 19. There is a certain sweetness to a man in his native soil; and so there is to natural men in the world, they are rooted in it by the greedy gripe their hearts take of it; Psalm xvii. 14. But when grace comes, that gripe is loosed, and fixes on heaven; and so that sweetness goes off, and the world turns the weary land to him; Isa. xxxii. 2. They do not find that sweet in it which others find, and which they themselves sometimes found in it. Their hearts are on the way-gate.

(2.) The other world is the main thing he has in view; 2 Cor. iv.

18. While the present world bears most bulk in the eyes of others, the world to come bears most bulk in the eyes of those that walk with God. That is their designed and desired rest, that sways them in the course of their life; their desires, hopes, and endeavours centre there. They overlook, and put on a holy regardlessness both of the good and ill of the present world, if by any means they may escape the ill of the world to come, and attain the good thereof. The purchase they design lies there.

(3.) He is making way to the other world, as a man on his journey; Cant. viii. 5; not only by the course of nature, as all others, but in heart and affections, by which the soul moves; hence the apostle says, Phil. i. 23, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." It is true, when grace is not in exercise, a believer may be for building tabernacles here, he may be very unwilling to pass over Jordan; but then he is not walking with God, but standing still. Sometimes when believers are in the dark as to their state, or for some other reasons, they may be crying, as Psalm xxxix. 13, "O spare me, that that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." Nevertheless there is never a groan they give under the body of death, never a desire they have of perfection of holiness, but there is wrapt up in it a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.

(4.) He is conforming himself to the fashions of the other world; Psalm xlv. 10. It is his own country, being born from above; he is a pilgrim here, and therefore a man wondered at, as one of strange fashions. He sets himself to be like God in holiness, for that is the happiness of those that are above. As men serve an apprenticeship in a trade, that afterwards they may set up in it; so the life of a walker with God is an apprenticeship in holiness here, to set up in glory hereafter.

(5.) *Lastly.* He draws his great comfort from the unseen things of another world; Heb. xi. 27. The apostle will have those in the Christian race to look off to Christ, "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God;" Heb. xii. 2. When this world smiles, his chief encouragement is not from it, but from the other world. When it frowns, thence is his support; Hab. xvii. 18. This has made the saints choose rather poverty and reproach, confinement, banishment, prisons, and death, than to act against the laws of heaven; and to undergo these joyfully, while the world wondered how they could bear up under them.

4. It is lively and active religion, being a walking with the living God, wherein there is not only grace, but grace in exercise; Cant. i.

12, That is a remarkable character given to Christians; 1 Pet. ii. 5, "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." What? "Stones," and yet "lively? Lively," and yet "stones?" Yes. The power of godliness is a compound of these two. It makes men lively in God's matters, yet as stones for solidity; solid, yet active, such as their spirits will stir within them in these matters. There are three sorts that cannot be walkers with God,

(1.) Dead people; they must be borne to their place, for they cannot go. Unregenerate graceless people cannot walk with God. What is the reason that so few walk with God. Why, truly the most part of gospel-hearers are dead people; Eph. ii. 2; and till they be raised out of the grave of a natural state, it is not to be expected of them. There was a great cry in Egypt while one was dead in every family; but alas! there are many so in many families.

(2.) Sleeping people; they are not fit for walking; and sleeping Christians cannot walk with God; Cant. v. 2. Sometimes the saints are going pleasantly on their way in the exercise of grace; their desires, love, faith, &c., are awake and stirring. But though unwatchfulness, security creeps on; and then they must lie down, they can go no further, till the Lord waken them; Matth. xxv. 5. And this is one reason why there are so many that have the root of the matter in them, who are not walking with God at this day.

(3.) Lame and wounded people, that have got broken bones by some grievous fall into sin; Psalm li. 8. They that have a thorn of guilt in their conscience, cannot walk till it be drawn out. For the conscience is defiled, the power of grace is weakened, the soul's communion with God marred; and they cannot recover their liveliness till they make new application of the blood of Christ, and renew their repentance.

5. It is regular religion, and uniform; for he that walks with God must needs walk by a constant rule, eyeing him not in some things only, but in all; Gal. vi. 16; Psalm xvi. 8. He gives one rule of walking, extending to man's whole conversation; and so he that walks with him, walks regularly, aiming at a holy niceness, preciseness, and exactness, in conformity to that rule in all things; Eph. v. 15, [*Gr.* Noticing carefully the prints of his feet with whom he walks.] Now this imports,

(1.) A design and fixed purpose in religion, namely, a purpose of conformity to God in it; Acts xi. 23.—"and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." The words are emphatic, "that they would cleave unto the Lord," *q. d.* abide by his side; "with purpose of heart," laid down and determined beforehand. A man may do a good thing in religion, which yet will

not be reckoned good indeed to him; because though he did it, he had no mind to please God in it. Religion's chance customers will never be esteemed walkers with God; Lev. xxvi. "walking contrary;" [*Heb.* By accident, at all adventures.]

(2.) A constancy in religion, in opposition to wavering; Heb. x. 23. Hereaway and thereaway in religion is not walking with God, who "is of one mind, and who can turn him?" Job xxiii. 13. They that walk with men, or according to their own affections and inclinations, it is no wonder to see them at one time destroying what at another time they were building up; of one way in religion to-day, and another to-morrow; for these are changeable like the moon. But walking with God, people would go even forward, and keep their way they were on; neither going off on the right hand, because others go off at the left; nor going off at the left, because others go off at the right; Prov. iv. 25—27.

(3.) An evenliness in religion, in opposition to a detestable unequalness; Matth. xxiii. 23. To run with vigour in the lesser things of religion, and move like a snail in the greatest matters of it, is not walking with God. A wide conscience in substantials, and a narrow one in circumstantials, is a conscience of a profane and godless make and mould; hence is that intimation; Hos. vi. 6, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings." A sincere conforming of ourselves to the duties required in the ten commands, summed up in love to God and our neighbour, is true holiness. Instituted ordinances are the means of holiness, which will be laid aside in heaven, when perfection in holiness is obtained. Now to be hot in these last, and cold in the other, is as detestable as to be concerned to give meat to your neighbour, while in the meantime you stab him to the heart, to take away his life.

(4.) An universalness in religion; Psalm cxix. 6. He that makes no bones of balking some steps, walks not with God. They that confine their religion to their religious actions, and extend it not to their natural and civil actions, have no religion at all. What does it avail to pretend to a tenderness of conscience in one thing, and yet in other things to swallow a camel; to a tenderness in dealing with God, while no tenderness appears in their dealings with men? Psalm cxix. 128; Matth. xxiii. 24. This is one of the causes of atheism and contempt of religion in the generation; Rom. ii. 23, 24, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written."

6. It is laborious and painful religion; for it is no easy life they

have whose trade it is to walk on their feet; Heb. vi. 10. And it is no easy religion to walk with God. Religion is not a business of saying, but doing; not of doing carelessly, but carefully, painfully, and diligently. If ye would be religious indeed, ye must put to your hands to work, set down your feet to walk, run the Christian race, ply all your strength to strive to enter in at the strait gate, wrestle with all your might against principalities and powers, &c. This will be evident, if ye consider these following things, (for an easy religion is the ruin of many).

(1.) Consider the scripture-notions of walking with God, in which the life of religion lies, and you will see they imply laboriousness. It is a working and labouring; John vi. 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" [*Gr.* work.] Here he that works not, shall not eat. It is not only a working, but a "working out;" Phil. ii. 12, a bringing the work to perfection, otherwise what is wrought will be lost; 2 John 8. Some labour is easier than other; but religion is compared to that which is the hardest labour.

[1.] It is compared to the husbandman's work, which is no easy labour, ploughing, sowing, reaping; Hos. x. 12, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground." There is no ground so hard to labour, as the hard heart is to the spiritual husbandman. No ground does so quickly and incessantly bring forth thorns and briers as the corrupt nature. And whereas the husbandman for ordinary finds his work as he leaves it, the Christian rarely finds it so.

[2.] To the soldier's labour; 2 Tim. iv. 7, "I have fought a good fight." He must watch while others sleep and take their ease, otherwise the enemy will be upon him. He must fight, he must not flee, but so fight as to overcome his spiritual enemies; Rev. iii. 21. He must pursue; Heb. xii. 14, namely, as one follows a flier, till he catch him. Heaven must be taken by storm; Matth. xi. 12. The gate is strait, there is no entering with ease; men must press into it, else they cannot come thither; Luke xvi. 16.

[3.] To the wrestler's labour; Eph. vi. 12, such as makes all the body to shake again, παλη. They must put forth their utmost strength, as those that are agonizing, wrestling with death; Luke xiii. 24. This the Christian finds in wrestling with strong lusts and violent temptations.

[4.] To the runner's labour in a race; Heb. xii. 1. That requires patience and great eagerness; Phil. iii. 13, 14; for they must so run as to obtain the prize; 1 Cor. ix. 24.

(2.) Consider the way the Christian has to walk in towards Im-

manuel's land, and ye will see that religion is a laborious business. For,

[1.] It is a difficult way; though plain in itself, yet to us it is difficult to know; Cant. i. 7, 8. How much precious time do the travellers spend in disputing which is the way, that might be better improved in going forward? Nay, many spend all their days in disputing about the way, till the sun go down on them, and night overtake them, ere they have begun to set off. Many mistake the way quite and clean; Eccl. x. 15, some going in the way of bare morality, some of drowsy wishes, and some of formality, &c. And many good Christians in the way are brought to that pass, that they know not where to set down the next step; but have hard work to know the road they should take.

[2.] It is a wilderness way, and therefore very solitary; Cant. iii. 6. Canaan was a type of heaven, and to it the Israelites came through the waste howling wilderness, where they had many a weary step. An emblem of the way to heaven. There the Christian often suffers hunger and thirst, there he is bit with fiery serpents, there he is attacked by furious enemies, and there he has the Jordan of death to pass.

[3.] It is a rising, an upward way; Cant. viii. 5. The way of sin is down the hill, easy, and therefore much frequented. But the way to glory lies up the hill; and hence so many are frightened from it at first sight; and many that seem to set fair off once, are quickly out of breath, and so retire. The temple, a type of heaven, was situate on a hill, Moriah; 1 Kings x. 5. Much hard travel had some of the Jews ere they got to Jerusalem, Psalm lxxxiv. 6, 7; and when they came there, they had the hill of God to ascend into; Psalm xxiv. 3.

(3.) Consider what he has to walk through, that walks with God in the way of the life of religion. He will meet with troops of opposition, but he must break through them all. They must walk through,

[1.] Opposition from the devil; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. No sooner does a soul set on the way of God in earnest, but the armies of hell are set in battle-array against him. The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the way," &c., but the Christian resolutely walks forward. But it is hard work when a poor Christian is engaged with a malicious and subtle devil, that has had five thousand years' experience of the black art of temptation.

[2.] Opposition from the world. The world agents the devil's cause for him, and never ceases to take the ill cause of the dragon against Michael by the end. But they that mind for heaven, must set their face against the storm, and weather all the blasts that come from that quarter. They will not want the counsel of the un-

godly, but they must refuse it; Psalm i. 1; the mockeries of the wicked, but they must despise them; Psalm cxix. 51. Nay, sometimes it comes to persecution, and resisting even to blood; but they that walk with God, must go through even a sea of blood when called; Matth. xvi. 15. Daniel would not leave his prayers for thirty days, when praying was death by the law; Dan. vi. 7, 10.

[3.] Opposition from their own hearts' lusts. A man's enemies are those of his own heart; Rom vii. 24. Sometimes the false heart will be saying within the man, "Arise and let us go back to Egypt;" sometimes with Peter, "Master, spare thyself;" sometimes with Judas, "What needs all this waste?" sometimes with Pharaoh, "I will not let you go." But the Christian must, over the belly of all these, walk forward; Matth. xi. 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

(4.) Consider what he has to walk over. There are some things in the Christian's way to heaven, which it may be he cannot get through, but he must go over them.

[1.] Over the belly of discouragements, Heb. x. 35. Satan plies the engine of discouragement with all his force, and often mightily prevails by it, to make the Christian halt in his Christian course. And they may long sit still, if they mind to sit till they be removed. Nay, they must even break over them and go forward, though it be hard labour to get over them, saying with David, Psalm xlii. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

[2.] Over the belly of stumbling-blocks laid in the way, Matth. xviii. 7. The world is ruined by offences. Some give the offence, and others take it; *i. e.* some fall in the way, and others cannot go by the stumbling-block, but break their necks over it. But he that walks with God, when he cannot get them removed out of the way, he goes over them; but will not go off his way for them, as people generally do; Job xvii. 9, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

[3.] Over the belly of their credit and reputation sometimes. Many a time a Christian must make a stepping stone of his credit, to follow his duty; as David did, when he said unto Michal, "I will yet be more vile than thus, and I will be base in mine own sight," 2 Sam. vi. 22. And it is a general rule in the practice of godliness, that they must be fools who will be wise. That is hard; but sometimes they must even make a stepping-stone of their reputation with carnal and untender professors, and lay their account with their obloquy and reproach for following their duty, as you may see Matth. xxvi. 7—10.

[4.] Over the belly of their affections and inclinations. It was Levi's commendation, "Who said unto his father and unto his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children," Deut. xxxiii. 9. They have little sense of practical religion, that do not see they must put the knife to the throat of their own inclinations and affections many times, to follow duty laid before them by the Lord. These are not the rule of our walk; but they that walk by their own inclinations and affections, walk not with God, but walk as they that are "sensual, not having the Spirit." And this is hard work, and so much the harder when they meet altogether, as sometimes they do in the case of the godly.

(5.) *Lastly*, Consider the little strength we have to walk with; 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." We got all of us a bruise in the loins of our first parents. Even such as walk with God are healed but in part, the broken bones are but beginning to knit. Well, if the iron be blunt, he must put to the more strength; the less one has, he must make the better use of it. All these considerations shew that religion is a laborious and painful business.

Well, Sirs, a slothful easy religion is a dangerous business. Take heed to it; it will not be found walking with God. The sluggard is lost by his own sloth; he "will not plow by reason of the cold," says Solomon; "therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing," Prov. xx. 4. He is the unprofitable servant; see his doom, Matth. xxv. 26—30, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He is unprofitable to himself, for he neglects his salvation-work; unprofitable to his Master, for he neglects his generation-work. Mark the sentence; he loved darkness to sleep in, he shall have his fill of it, "outer darkness." For carnal mirth, he shall "weep." He would not work because of the cold, in hell he shall "gnash his teeth."

7. It is self-denied religion; Matth. xvi. 24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Thus our Lord Jesus walked when he was in the world; and "he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked," 1 John ii. 6. Self-denial is one of the first lessons that Christ puts in the hands of his scholars, and they have need of it in practice through the whole of their conversation. In the religion of walkers with God these two things are remarkable, laboriousness and self-denial, which sweetly meet together in it, as the wings of the cherubims over the ark.

(1.) Laboriousness, working as if they were to win heaven thereby,

1 Cor. ix. 24, following holiness with all eagerness, as knowing that heaven is not given to loiterers, but labourers; and endeavouring to take the New Jerusalem as by storm. For walking with God, they look on themselves as under his eye, and therefore ply their salvation and generation-work. And the love of Christ constrains them to be serviceable to him, and to ply themselves for conformity to his image.

(2.) Self-denial.

[1.] Overlooking their work and labour, as if God had not required it, putting no confidence in it before the Lord, nor valuing themselves upon it in his sight, Phil. iii. 3; but laying the whole stress of their acceptance with God on the merits of Christ. This must needs be so; for,

(1.) He that walketh with God is acquainted with the holiness and spotless purity of himself, the exceeding breadth of his law, and the jealousy of his Holy Spirit; and therefore he cannot miss to see the imperfections of his best works in these bright glasses, and say as Psalm xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors?" and cxxx. 3, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?"

(2.) He honours the Son, living by faith in him, Gal. ii. 20. And that is one's going out of himself for all to Jesus Christ, out of his own ill in point of practice and self-loathing, and out of his own good in point of confidence, Isa. lxiv. 6.

[2.] Overlooking their own strength for working, as mere weakness, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Self-denial makes one go out of himself for sanctification to the Spirit of Christ, as well as for justification to his blood, 1 Cor. i. 30; Isa. xlv. 24. For walking with God is a walking and leaning on him to be carried on the way, Cant. viii. 5; a staying one's self upon him, as the traveller doth upon his staff. This must needs be so; for,

(1.) Whoso tries the way of walking with God, will quickly find he is not man enough for the opposition he will meet with in the way, not able to go but as he is led, nay nor stand but as he is held up, John xv. 5. The least temptation or unmortified lust, how hard is it to one left to grapple with it in his own strength? Peter falls at the voice of a silly maid.

(2.) The scripture declares, that there is no safety in, nor good to be had from, one's working merely from his own inherent stock, Prov. xxviii. 26, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Nay there is a curse denounced on him that does so, which will cause that he will never bring his work to perfection, Jer. xvii. 5, 6, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm,

and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness." And therefore have we that watchword, Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

8. It is humble religion, Mic. vi. 8. For howsoever any may set up before men, they must needs vail their faces when they see themselves in the presence of a holy God. Proud and conceited religion is of the wrong stamp, for it is quite unlike the Spirit of the holy Jesus; and of the saints, who, the more religious they were, were always the more humble. And the more proud and conceited professors be of their religion, be sure they are so far strangers to walking with God. Now, this humble religion will appear,

(1.) In low thoughts of ourselves, and honourable thoughts of others, in whom the image of God appears, Phil. ii. 3. Paul counts himself the chief of sinners, though the chief of New Testament saints. A high conceit of ourselves, with an undervaluing of others, is a shrewd sign of little acquaintance with walking with God. For it is impossible but the man that walks with God, must see more evil in himself, than he can see in any other, that bears any thing of the holy image of God. But he that has the foul face, but looks not into the glass, may think it more beautiful than any that he sees.

(2.) In being denied to vain glory, Phil. ii. 3. He that walks with God will not have occasion to hunt after the applause of men, unless he go off his way, and so far leave his Leader. It is a sad sign of little walking with God, to affect so much honour and respect from men, and for one to trumpet forth his own praise; a disposition smelling rank of a naughty heart, Prov. xxvii. 2, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth." John xii. 43, "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." It may nourish one to death, but not to life, like the chameleon, to live on air.

(3.) In refusing to stoop to nothing, whereby the honour of God, and the edification of the souls of others may be advanced; as exemplified in our Lord's humbling himself, Phil. ii. 5—8. He that walks with God will be content to make a stepping-stone of his credit, ease, &c. for these ends, counting nothing too low for him whereby he may follow the Lord. But alas! there is a cursed respect for ourselves, that so prevails with many, that they count some duties of religion below them. And their pretended credit must spread, though it should darken the heavens, and wrap up the glory of God in a cloud.

(4.) In a kindly accommodating of our spirits to humbling providences, Job i. 21. Sometimes the Lord leads his people very low, through afflictions, crosses, poverty, and wants. The humble will follow him whithersoever he goes. But the proud, nothing will satisfy them, but rising, and they will blacken the heavens with their murmurings and complaints when they are falling. But if our lot be not brought up to our spirits, let our spirits be brought down to our lot. We are on our journey out of this world, and we may come as soon, and more safely, to an happy end of it, the low way, as the high way.

(5.) *Lastly*, In an absolute resignation to the will of God, saying in everything, "Not my will, but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42. Walking with God is a following of him as the shadow does the body. It causes men put a blank in the Lord's hand, that he may fill up in it what he pleases. But so far as we come short of the great duty of absolute resignation to the will of God, we come short of walking with God.

9. It is constant religion. Walking is not a rising up and sitting down again, but a continued action, like that of a traveller going on till he come to his journey's end. Enoch walked on through the world, till he was not. It is constant in two respects.

(1.) Without interruption. It is not a religion taken by fits and starts but going on evenly; Psalm xvi. 8, "I have set the Lord always before me." Some people's religion is like an ague, wherein they have their hot fits and their cold fits. They go to and fro; they will be one day for God, and another for the devil. Whatever good mood they be found in at any time, they do not abide at it, Hos. vi. 4. And so they can never bring it to any good account; for they are always beginning, ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth. These people's religion consists in two things.

[1.] Flashes, and that is all they have for heaven; flashes of affections like those mentioned, Psalm lxxviii. 34, "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God." The spirit of holiness does not rest on them, but some light touches of his common influences they get, which do not abide. Hence with convictions sometimes, and with melted but unsanctified affections, their hearts will be as when in the time of great rain every pool is full, but quickly dry again, because it has no spring. Whereas it is otherwise with those that walk with God; John iv. 14, "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

[2.] Overleaps into the holy ground; and that is all that heaven

has from them; Job xxvii. 9, 10, "Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God? They do not usually feed on God's pastures, but at the table of the world and their lusts. God saw this was the temper of the Israelites, which made him say concerning them, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever," Deut. v. 29. They will be to-day crying Hosannah, to-morrow, Crucify him. Religion is not their element, and so they cannot abide with it, Job xxiv. 13.

(2.) Without defection and apostacy. We read of some, John vi. 66, that "went back, and walked no more with him." They cast off religion, and laid it by for good and all. These people's walking with God (if we may call it so), will be no more remembered but to their condemnation, Ezek. iii. 20. They will never see heaven; Luke ix. *ult.*, "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Lot's wife was an emblem of such; she looked back to Sodom, and God turned her to a pillar of salt, for a terror to apostates. For such he abhors, Heb. x. 38. But they that walk with God will not be,

[1.] Bribed away from him, by the allurements of the world and flesh, which is one engine of Satan whereby he makes many apostates, as Judas, Demas, &c. How many are there who have sometimes, by their addictedness to the way of God, promised great things, and so have gone on for a time flourishing? But afterwards Satan has led them aside by temptations, and always farther and farther off the way, till he has got them to cast off religion altogether.

(2.) Boasted away from him, by the severities they may meet with in following the Lord; Cant. viii. 7, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Sometimes Satan plays the fox, by cunning wiles to draw sinners to apostacy; and sometimes the lion, to drive them to it by hardships, mockeries, hard usage, and persecutions. But religion, where it is of the right stamp, will last, whatever methods may be used to put it out.

10. *Lastly*, It is progressive religion; religion that is going forward; Prov. iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There is a mark the soul aims at when it sets off in the Lord's way; and that is perfection in holiness, and walking with God is a pressing forward to it, Phil. iii. 13, 14. Such a one is adding a cubit to his spiritual stature. When the seed of grace is sown in the heart in regenera-

tion, the man must walk with God, that so the seed may grow and shoot forth. And so in walking with God the new creature grows,

(1.) Inward, growing into Christ, Eph. iv. 15; uniting more closely with him, and cleaving more firmly to him as the head of influences, which is the spring of all other growth.

(2.) Outward, in good works, in life and conversation. Not only like Naphtali do they give goodly words, but like Joseph they are as fruitful boughs.

(3.) Upward; for their conversation is in heaven, Phil. iii. 20; in heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the world.

(4.) *Lastly*, Downward, in humility and self-loathing. Thus he that walks with God makes progress in sanctification.

There is also in it a progress in experimental knowledge of religion, 2 Pet. iii. *ult.* The traveller the farther he goes on, he knows the country the better; and he that walks with God gets Christian experience. Not only is his head more filled with raw unfelt notions, but his soul is stored with saving acquaintance with truth. The further he goes on, he becomes the more expert a traveller to the heavenly Canaan. He observes what has worsted, and what bettered his soul's case; and so will labour to eschew the one, and follow the other. And when he comes to a dark step, he can bear out the better, that it is not the first he has gone through.

Thus far of the nature of walking with God.

II. I shall next confirm this doctrine, That the life of religion lies in walking with God. In order to this consider,

1. That religion is not a matter of speculation, but of practice. Whatever light it brings into the mind, it is for moving the heart and affections. And therefore it is called the doctrine according to godliness. And the greatest mysteries of our religion are mysteries of godliness; 1 Tim. iii. 16. I think the devil may be a greater speculative divine than the best of us can pretend to be. And the apostle supposes one may understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and yet be nothing; 1 Cor. xiii. 2. So little worth is the knowledge of religion without the practice, the word without the power.

2. All other practice of religion, without walking with God, is but bodily exercise, little worth, 1 Tim. iv. 8. The Jews wrote on their synagogue-doors, "Prayer without intention is as a body without the spirit." And where walking with God is wanting, there is the carcase of religion, but the soul of it is away. It can never be pleasing to God, because it is not agreeable to his nature, John iv. 24.

3. The great difference betwixt the sincere Christian and the hypo-

crite lies here, Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." What makes the sincere Christian differ from the hypocrite in his walk? Is it that he performs external duties? No, you cannot pitch upon one of these, but a hypocrite may perform the same? Is it that he knows and can speak of religion better? No, a hypocrite may excel a good Christian in these gifts. Is it that he has sometimes a flood of affections? No; Pharaoh, Esau, and the stony-ground hearers wanted not these. But the hypocrite never comes up to walking with God, which the sincere does, though not always.

4. Without this there is no sanctification, because without it there is no communion with God, and so no sanctifying influences. A man may pray many a prayer, hear many a sermon, and be many a year a professor of religion, and yet never be a whit the more holy unless he walk with God. All without that in this point, is but the washing of a blackmoor, labour in vain. For spiritless lifeless walking will never heal our unholy nature. Hence when the heart is away from God, the man is as "the heath in the wilderness, and shall not see when good cometh," Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

5. This is that part of religion that will remain in heaven for ever, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. Thus the happiness of heaven is held out under the notion of walking with God, Rev. iii. 4. All divine institutions tend to this. For this was the course the first Adam was set on, but broke off from; this course the second Adam held; and to be brought back to this will be man's greatest happiness. So that without controversy the soul of religion lies here.

6. *Lastly*, Our spiritual life lies in communion with God. In ourselves we are dead spiritually, being slain in Adam. Now our life is in Christ, Col. iii. 4, and we cannot partake of that life, but by communion with him, Gal. ii. 20, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." It is that communion with Christ that makes men truly lively, and their religion, religion indeed, in so far as it makes men walk with God.

I shall now make some improvement of this subject, in uses of information, reproof, and exhortation.

Use I. Of information. This lets us see,

1. That the religion of those is little worth, that are utter strangers to walking with God. It is but the carcase of religion without the soul. The apostle speaks of "vain religion;" Jam. i. 26, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

This is such. It is vain with respect to God's approbation, for he will never approve of it; Rom. ii. 28, 29; and vain with respect to their own salvation, it will never bring them to heaven, nor abide the trial; Matth. vii. 22.

2. True religion lies not in a form, but has a power with it causing a holy walk; 2 Tim. iii. 5. True religion is not a vain inefficacious thing, but has a commanding power with it. It is in the heart like the centurion, when it says to the man, "Go," he "must go;" and when it says, "Come, he cometh." It has a restraining power, it binds up the man from sin. Job was tempted to blaspheme, but the power of godliness restrained him. It sets the man in God's way, it keeps him on it, and causes him to go forward in it.

3. That no man has more true religion than what influences his walk. God will never measure people's religion by fair words or a shining profession, but by the course of their life and actions, in faith, love, and other moral duties. God has written his law in the Bible, has transcribed it again into the renewed heart, and they write it over again in their holy conversation.

4. There is little of the life of religion in the world, there is so little walking with God in it. There are few that have the form of godliness in comparison of those that want it; and yet but few of those who have the form, that have the power too. How few are there that eye God in all things, whose hearts go along with him as the shadow with the body, that walk with him in ordinances, in providences, in their stations and relations, and in their actions, natural, civil, and religious! O how rare is practical, inward, heavenly, &c. religion!

USE II. Of reproof. Hence we may reach a reproof to several sorts of persons, that do not walk with God.

1. Those that have never yet risen up from their sin. Walking with God is a motion of the soul from sin to sanctification; Isa. i. 16, 17. It is like the going up a stair, where the first step raiseth a man from the ground, and so he goes up by degrees till he come there where he would be. Heaven is the upper room, faith and holiness are the stairs, and the state of sin is the ground. But alas! many have not come the length of the first step yet; they are still in their sins, under the guilt of them, and under the power of them. They have not with Lazarus come out of the grave, with Matthew left the receipt of custom, nor with the palsied man risen out of their bed; and far less with Enoch do they walk with God.

(1.) Consider, we cannot say of you, "Ye are not far from the kingdom of God;" for truly ye are even as far from it as Adam led you and left you. The way to the pleasant land is long, and your

day is far spent; but to this day ye have not entered on the way, nor stirred a foot from your old sins. Are ye not afraid, that your be gone day ere ye are able to undertake the journey?

(2.) If ye lie still, ye will never see heaven. As soon shall heaven and hell meet, as you shall get to heaven in that state and case. If ye sit still ye die; and therefore rise and walk, and flee from the wrath to come.

2. Those whose life is a mere wandering; Eccl. x. 15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." Many spend their days thus wandering; among the creatures their souls wander, and from one they go to another; they take a miserable round in the vanities of this world, but never go beyond them to God. They wander up and down in the way of sin; sometimes they fall into one miserable course, sometimes into another, but never into the course of holiness. They walk in a round, whereof the centre is hell, and the circumference sin and vanity. All their life they go from one sin and one vanity to another, and at death, when they leave the world, they are in the same place they were in when they came in to it; *i.e.* As they were born in sin they die in it, and tumble down to hell, their miserable life being not a walking with God, but a wallowing in one puddle of sin all along.

(1.) Your thus wandering is a clear evidence that your natural blindness is not removed; Rev. iii. 17. Your plague is in your head, and so your heart cannot be right. Ye have never yet discovered the excellency of Christ the Captain of our salvation, nor the glory of the land that is afar off, and ye know not the way leading to it. Therefore your case is sad.

(2.) Remember the generation that wandered in the wilderness, died there, and never saw the land of Canaan; 1 Cor. x. 5. This will be your doom, if ye continue. Ye are walking in a mist among fearful precipices and fiery serpents; how can ye miss to fall?

3. Backsliders, that have turned their backs on God's way, John vi. 66. These, instead of walking with God, fall away from him, back to their old sins. They gave up their names to him, listed themselves under his banner, but now they have turned runaways. They came under bonds to God and his way; but they have broken his bonds, and cast away his cords from them. They once appeared on God's side, but they have got over into the devil's camp.

(1.) Your sin is greater than if ye had never set off in the Lord's way. Ye know that relapses into a disease are most dangerous, and most hopeless; and so "it had been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than after you have known it, to turn from

the holy commandment delivered unto you," 2 Pet. ii. 21. For then men sin over the belly of more light than before, they cast a particular infamy upon the way of God, as if they would make the world to believe from their experience that Christ's yoke is intolerable.

(2.) Your condemnation will be the greater. It is a fearful word, Heb. x. 38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Prov. xiv. 14, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." As the sorest fall is from the highest place, so the deepest plunge into the lake of fire is from the threshold of heaven. And when the backslider is taken in the snare of destruction, it will be a peculiar worm in his conscience for ever, that once in a day he had well nigh escaped.

4. Resisters of the Holy Ghost, whom God is using all means with to draw them to his way, but they will not come on it, Jer. ii. 25, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Not only are they called by the word, but by providence. God meets some in their evil ways, like the angel with the drawn sword in his hand meeting Balaam, and yet they will not leave it. God hedges up their sinful ways with thorns, yet they break through the thorn-hedge. Their consciences tell them they are wrong, and give them many a secret blow to drive them into the way: but they follow their corruptions over the belly of their consciences.

(1.) This is dreadful and dangerous work, as being a fighting against God and against yourselves, Acts vii. 51. But though the potsherds of the earth strive among themselves, it is miserable folly to strive with their Maker. The voice of the word, providence, and conscience is the voice of God; take heed how ye entertain the same.

(2.) The issue must needs be terrible, if it be continued in, Job ix. 4. For when God judgeth, he will overcome. What can be expected of it, but that God be provoked to cease striving with you, and to lay the reins on your neck, Gen. vi. 3; Psalm lxxxi. 11, and afterwards call you to an account as wilful rejecters of salvation?

5. Enemies to the way of God, who not only do not walk in it themselves, but hinder others to walk in it, as the scribes and Pharisees, Matth. xxiii. 13. There are agents for the devil in the world, who have a malignant hatred against the power of godliness, and set themselves to quench the Spirit in others, by mocking, tempting them to sin, &c. Consider,

(1.) That is the devil's trade, and therefore a sad indication of one that is a child of the devil. Let such hear what the Spirit of the Lord says to them, Acts xiii. 10, "O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" God

is especially an enemy unto those that are enemies to his ways, and so set themselves to advance the devil's kingdom.

(2.) The blood of souls will be a heavy load; and such as turn others from the way of God, their blood will be upon their head. And those that set themselves that way, they need not doubt but that in such a corrupt world they will always be successful with some, Luke xvi. 27, 28.

6. Loose and licentious professors, who walk so scandalously that the world may see they do not walk with God, Jer. vii. 8—10, "Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" There are many that profess religion, that it were telling religion they did not pretend to it. For hearken to their words, take a view of their life, there is no tenderness to be seen there. The voice is Jacob's, but their rough hands declare them to be profane Esau's. There is nothing that looks like holiness about them, but the profession of the truth; but their tongues and their lives are profane. Whoso sees them, may see their light hearts and offensive lives have nothing of the ballast of the power of godliness. Consider,

(1.) A loose and licentious life, under whatever profession it appear, argues a godless and graceless heart, Phil. iii. 18, 19. It is an easy thing for people to make a profession, which costs them not the life of a lust; to addict themselves to this or that opinion, while they do not addict themselves to the study of a holy life; to pin a new creed to an old life. But were grace in the heart, and they made partakers of the new nature, it would make them study holiness in all manner of conversation.

(2.) What will the end of that way be, think ye? See Psalm cxxv. *ult.*, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." And if there be a hotter place in hell than another, the hypocrite that has a profession of religion, but a licentious life, shall get it, Matth. xxiv. *ult.* And their profession will serve but to make them so much the more marks for the arrows of God's vengeance.

7. Close hypocrites, whose outward conversation is blameless, but in the meantime they are strangers to the life of religion, and walking with God, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," 2 Tim. iii. 5. They go about duties, but they are strangers to communion with God; they walk blamelessly, but walk not with God; they abound in bodily exercise, but are estranged to spiritual

worship; they exercise gifts, but they have nothing of the exercise of grace. Their souls are estranged from the life of God, and are dead within them; and they are like some dead beasts, there is nothing of them profitable but the skin, *i. e.* the outward form.

(1.) Consider that religion may serve to blind your own eyes, and the eyes of the world, but not the eyes of God. The close hypocrite will be like Ahab in disguise, but the arrow hit him for all that; for there is no deceiving the eyes of the Almighty.

(2.) It will have a miserable issue. God loves to discover hypocrites, Rev. iii. 16, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Sometimes he withdraws his restraint that he has on them, and turns out their inside in this life before the world, as Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira. But he will not fail to do it at the great day, when every one shall be judged according to his works.

8. *Lastly*, Gracious persons, whose grace is not in exercise, who though they be spiritually alive in respect of their state, yet are not lively, but dead in their frame, Cant. v. 2. They are not walking with God as sometimes they have been, but are fallen asleep, and are going after the way of their own hearts. O Sirs, ye are off the way, and I will tell you how ye may know it. A gracious person may know that he is not walking with God,

(1.) By the decay of his love to his Guide. This was God's controversy with the church of Ephesus; Rev. ii. 4, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." And may not the Lord say to many of his people this day, as Jer. ii. 2, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown?" While the soul walks with God, it keeps its eye upon Christ, and seeing him cannot but love him. But the soul loses sight of Christ; then out of sight, out of mind; and what the eye sees not, the heart rues not. A sad sign that ye are off the way.

(2.) By decay of love to the fellow-travellers; Matth. xxiv. 12, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." There has been a day wherein the people of God have dearly loved one another, delighted to pray, converse, &c., together; and the wrong done to any one of them was, by reason of their sympathy, as done to them all. But alas! where is that now? Christian love is much decayed. What is the reason? Why, travellers as long as they are going out the road together, have a particular kindness one for another; but when they begin to stay by the way and scatter, one going to his business, and another to his, love wears off. Even so the Lord's people taking different ways, and scattering from one another, their love to each other cools.

(3.) By the decay of zeal for the honour of their Leader. If one would affront a captain on the head of his troop, all the soldiers' hearts would stir within them. But when he is left alone, there is none concerned to resent the injuries done to him. I never like that zeal, that, overlooking the substantials of religion, burns out on the lesser things. But this I will say, that were there more walking with God among us, there would be more zeal for the great things of religion; and if so, then more for the lesser things too. Were we more concerned for the kingdom of Christ within us, we would be more zealous for the kingdom of Christ without us.

(4.) By the decay of tenderness, and care to please the Lord; Col. i. 10. While David was walking with God, he was tender of the least sin, his heart smote him when he had cut off the lap of Saul's garment. But at another time he lay long under horrible guilt in the matter of Uriah, his heart being hardened. Sometimes Christians could have had no rest without the enjoyment of God in duties; but alas! at other times they are formal in performance of their duty as a task. And an evil deed will not be so heavy to them, as a rash word or vain thought would sometimes have been.

(5.) By the decay of diligence in duties, instead whereof slothfulness creeps in; Eccl. x. 18. He that walks with God will be diligent to note every step of his way; so it is an ill sign when the heart turns careless. He will be much conversant with God in the duties of religion, often found on the road to the throne, because he has much business with heaven; but when he walks not with God, he remits of his diligence, and comes far short of his former pains in his soul-matters.

(6.) By a decay of heavenly-mindedness, instead of which there creeps in carnality and earthly-mindedness. Walking with God is a heavenly life; Phil. iii. 20. And while a child of God holds at it, it tinctures all his thoughts, words, and actions with a savour of heaven; Cant. iii. 6. But when that fails, all these savour of death.

(7.) *Lastly.* By a decay of liveliness and earnestness in duties. Sometimes a child of God is like Jacob wrestling for the blessing; he is very peremptory, and will not take a naysay; Gen. xxxii. 26. Sometimes again as Ephraim, like a "silly dove, without heart," Hos. vii. 11; having neither heart nor hand to ply the throne of grace; a sad sign of not walking with God.

Now, to such I would say two things,

[1.] Horrid ingratitude is stamped on your ceasing to walk with God; Jer. ii. 31. The pleasantest and most profitable days a Christian ever has, are those wherein he walks with God; and when he gives over that, his real well days are done; Hos. ii. 7. Then his

bones flourish as an herb, but otherwise they wither like the grass. Therefore may we say, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" Deut. xxxii. 6.

[2.] It is easy to go off the way, but not so to get on it again; it is easy to halt and sit down, but not to rise up again and walk. Ye had need to awake in time, lest the Lord give you a fearful wakening, either by some heavy stroke, or, which is worse, by letting you fall into some grievous guilt, as he did David.

Use *ult.* Of exhortation. Study the life of religion, in walking with God. Walk not after your lusts, nor in the way of the world, either its way of profaneness, or its way of formality; but go through the world walking with God. I offer the following motives,

Mot. 1. Ye are going fast through the world, and ere long will be at your journey's end. Time runs with a rapid course; and whether ye sleep or wake, ye will soon find yourselves pass the border of time; Job ix. 25, 26. The watch going wrong may run as fast as when she goes right; and the man that walks after his own lusts, makes as great speed to the end of his journey, as he that walks with God. And since we must walk through the world, and cannot abide here, why will we not choose the best company in our way, and walk with God?

2. Walking with God is the only way to get safe to our journey's end; Heb. ii. 10. It was only Caleb and Joshua that got to Canaan, for they followed the Lord fully. All the world is on a journey; but there are two ways, and two companies. There is the way of holiness, and all the saints walk there, with the Lord on their head; and the end of this way is salvation. And there is the way of sin, a broad way, wherein are many roads, bare civility, morality, profaneness, and formality; all the unregenerate walk there, and the god of this world on their head, and the end is destruction. Choose ye with whom ye will walk.

3. Religion is not a matter of speculation and talking, but a matter of practice and walking with God; Psalm cxvi. 9, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Your eternal state lies at stake, which ye will never bring to a comfortable issue without this. Till ye enter on this way, ye are to begin to be religious, how long soever your standing in a profession has been. After children are born, it is long ere they begin to walk; but as soon as one is born again, and becomes a child of God, he immediately falls a walking with God.

4. There is a pleasure, a refined, undreggy pleasure, in walking with God; Prov. iii. 17, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." This pleasure arises from the testi-

mony of conscience, which is a feast to the soul; 2 Cor. i. 12, enough to make a sick man whole; from the intrinsic pleasantness in the way of holiness, which has a surpassing beauty in the eyes of those that are capable to discern; Psalm cxix. 97 and 165; and from the soul's communion with God which it finds in that way; Psalm iv. 6, 7.

Object. But what can it do to us for a through-bearing in the world? Answ. Very much, "having promise of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come;" 1 Tim. iv. 8. Those that walk with God have a promise of provision in this word; Psalm xxxvii. 3; Matth. vi. 30. It is no maybe, but as sure as the covenant can make it; Isa. xxxiii. 16, "Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." It is true, God's bond is not always paid as it were in money: but if not, it is always paid in money-worth, If they get not the thing itself, they get as good; 2 Cor. vi. 10,— "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

6. Walking with God is the best security in evil days. There are sinning and ensnaring times; who can be so safe in them as they that walk with God? even as in a dark day, those that keep closest with their guide, are likeliest to get safest through; Prov. xi. 3, "The integrity of the upright shall guide them." There are suffering times, days of common calamity; and then those that walk with God are likeliest to be brought through, as Noah; Gen. vi. 9.

7. *Lastly.* This is the way all have taken, that have walked through the world to Immanuel's land. God's children only are heirs; and they that are his children must follow him; Eph. v. 1. There is no walking with God in heaven, but for those that walk here with him in holiness. And therefore remember, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" Rom. viii. 13.

I shall now shut up all with some directions, and advices for walking with God.

1. Labour to be sure ye are Christians indeed, and once fairly set on the way, by closing with Christ. Renounce the world and your lusts; and look on yourselves as men bound for another world, under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's hosts; Cant. iv. 8.

2. Lay it down for a certain conclusion, that religion is quite another thing than mere external performances. It is a conforming of the soul to the image of Christ, and of the life and conversation to the holy law, by a participation of the virtue of his blood and Spirit. And therefore there must be constant endeavours to abide close by Jesus Christ, in the exercise of faith, love, and universal tenderness, not only in life, but in heart; Prov. iv. 23.

3. Being set on the way, labour to hold by it. Ye must learn

not to be shamed out of God's way, by the reproaches of the world. Care not for the name of singularity, and be not ashamed to be fools in the world's eyes; 1 Cor. iii. 18, 19, not to be bribed nor boasted out of God's way, by any advantage or loss in the world; Heb. xi. 24.

4. Closely ply the work of mortification; Gal. v. 24. What is your need of Christ, if it be not to save you from your sins? Matth. i. 21. Beware of making Christ the minister of sin, by going the round betwixt sinning and confessing, without suitable endeavours for mortification. Mortification is no easy business; but most necessary.

5. Beware of indulging yourselves in those things that are accounted but small sins, and abstain from all appearances of evil. No man will walk with God, to whom any sin is so small that he will make no bones of it. And those that stand not to go frankly into the borders of sin, will very readily step over.

6. When ye fall lie not still, but get up again by a new application of the Redeemer's blood, and renewing your repentance. For no man can walk so but he will stumble; but then the suitable remedies are to be improved for recovery.

7. Be frequent in self-observation and examination. Take notice how often the pulse of your affections beats. Retire into yourselves, and observe the way of your hearts and lives; Hag. i. 7. And examine yourselves often as to your state and case; 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Ask yourselves whether ye be going forward, or backward, what profit ye make of duties?

8. Be diligent observers of providence; Psalm cvii. *ult.*, towards yourselves and others.

9. Be tender of waiting on the Lord, to know sin and duty in particular cases.

10. Be diligent in all religious duties, missing none of them, and being frequent in them all. For these are the trysting places for communion with God, which they that walk with him must diligently attend.

11. Prepare for duties before ye set about them; not only public duties, but private and secret ones. For the rushing on these without consideration, is the high way to make them vain and fruitless.

12. Labour to be spiritual in all things; in religious duties seeking to exercise grace, and enjoy communion with God; and even in other things, to act as under his eye, and by influence of his command.

13. *Lastly.* Live by faith; 2 Cor. v. 7. For it is by faith that the soul is set and kept in this walk.

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